EXPERIMENTS WITH PARTRIDGES

by D. R. L.

The SHOOTING TIMES

and Country Magazine

SEVENTY-FIFTH YEAR | FRIDAY, JULY 19th, 1957 | 1s. 3d. WEEKLY

PLANNING WELL AHEAD

Parasites and Pestilence

Wild pheasants and partridges are, on the whole, hardy and healthy, but when we start to rear or preserve them in fairly large numbers, maladies sometimes appear. The broody fowls which hatch and rear the young game often carry diseases and parasites and, although they are fairly resistant to their own brands of frightfulness, their young charges may not be. At least we shall be spared these sources of infection when incubator-hatching and brooder-rearing are perfected. In the meantime, most of these setbacks can be avoided if healthy broodies and clean rearing-fields are selected. Turkeys and poultry on free-range can spread diseases in field and covert.

Many reared gamebirds also suffer from digestive ailments. Too much fibre, a lack of suitable protein, or a mineral deficiency—and the result is an unthrifty chick. And instead of culling it—we probably let it be—mistakenly hoping that one day it will "make a bird". With modern scientifically-balanced foods, there is no cause for malnutrition. Chills and the like are common, and are sometimes due to a combination of weak stock and careless management in bad weather but, like human influenza, there are also viruses which seem to become virulent in the autumn.

Although a certain cure for gapes has yet to be discovered, blowing the birds with one of the special powders will cause some of the worms to be coughed up, and is probably better than nothing. Other disorders that are encountered include fungus infections—occurring when birds have access to mouldy heaps of grain or straw – and the incurable poultry leukaemia in its many forms. Although modern drugs are available for checking blackhead and coccidiosis, prevention is better than cure. Infected broodies, weak stock, contaminated ground, poor food and bad management all contribute to disease. Avoidance of these factors is better than all the bottles of pink medicine in the world! Should things go wrong, it is better to send away some fresh specimens for prompt examination by an expert, rather than start sanguinary explorations with a pocket knife.

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Another Anniversary

THIS, it appears, is the season of anniversaries. Only recently we offered our congratulations to "British Birds" on its fiftieth birthday and a reminder that The Wildfowlers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland is fast approaching the same age has appeared in our pages. Today we extend greetings to another organisation intimately connected with the countryside and sport on the occasion of the golden jubilee of the Country Landowners' Association.

To be accurate, our message is sixteen days late, for the C.L.A. was born on July 3, 1907.

Those were days of deep depression in this country's agriculture. While other industries prospered the oldest lay in the doldrums forgotten and unnoticed, and likely to remain there, for townsfolk showed little sympathy for the rural community. If the voice of agriculture was to be heard and its claims made known before Parliament, organisation was necessary, and thus it was that a year after the formation of the National Union of Agricultural Workers and a twelve month before the National Farmers' Union, the C.L.A. came into being, starting life as the Central Land Association and becoming, after the first world war, exclusively an organisation of agricultural landowners. Eight years ago, in the interests of descriptive clarity, it changed its title again to the present one.

The C.L.A. has always gone about its business with quiet efficiency, and its battle honours, though perhaps few, have, nevertheless, been decisive and important. With other allies in the industry it achieved in 1929 the total derating of agricultural land, and by itself brought about those great taxation concessions to landowners, the maintenance and the capital expenditure claims.

Plans for the future are constructive, including the modernisation of buildings and the re-equipment of farms for more efficient and less expensive production. There are still big arrears caused by war and depression in the industry, to be made up. For the new capital improvement grants which the Government will introduce later in the year, the C.L.A. may claim to be largely responsible. Here may be seen public recognition of the economic difficulties now facing the landowner.

It is good to see, too, that the Association is not neglecting game conservation, but rather realising that game is no less a farm crop than corn or roots, is giving a lead to sporting landowners. With the help of the I.C.I. Game Research Station, the Somerset and Dorset branches of the C.L.A. have lately held game preservation meetings and clay pigeon shoots for landowners and keepers; the former at Blagdon and the latter at Crichel. These practical demonstrations and discussions are a new venture which will, no doubt, be adopted by all the county branches.

In short, the C.L.A. maintains its vigilant watch on all country landowners' interests and has good reason to be proud of its achievements over the past half-century.

THE SHOOTING TIMES AND COUNTRY MAGAZINE

Official Organ of THE WILDFOWLERS' ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

No. 3906 FRIDAY, JULY 19, 1957 Founded 1882

The wild life of today is not ours to dispose of as we please. We have it in trust. We must account for it to those who come after.—King George VI.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Pigeon in the House

In the House of Commons last week Mr. Vane asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the cost of the subsidy on cartridges for shooting pigeons over the latest convenient period; and whether he was satisfied with the working of the scheme.

Mr. Godber, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture said the cost of the rebate on cartridges for the 12 months ended March 31 last was about £42,000. The new arrangements introduced last year have led to a considerable improvement in the working of the scheme, which has been running without any real difficulties.

Mr. Vane asked if it did not cost a substantial sum in addition to this £42,000. Would he see if he could do away with this scheme, which seemed quite unnecessary bearing in mind the damage done by pigeon? People should be encouraged to shoot them without such a bribe. (How? asks "Auceps").

Mr. Godber replied that he thought it was doing valuable work. He was advised that more than two million birds were recorded as having been shot as a result of this scheme last year.

Mr. Peyton asked the Parliamentary secretary to look at this again. There was no reason why people should not take action in their own interests without having a present made to them at the taxpayers' expense.

Mr. Godber replied that he had been looking into this only recently and was satisfied that it was performing some useful advantage to the agricultural community in helping to keep down these pests.

Extra Mural Vermin

A classic example of the frustration of game preservation efforts by the negligent attitude of landowners and tenants outside a reserve is provided by the following report contained in the latest newsletter of the Kent Wildfowlers' Association. The two reserves which the association manages in West Kent have been carefully watched this spring with surprising and also very worrying results.

These are both very experimental in the possible use of industrial ballast waters as wildfowl reserves and it was decided therefore to do little this year, in order to get some idea of what happens in a normal season.

The results show the appalling damage done by vermin—carrion crows in particular. In 1956, of approximately 120 mallard hatched, about 12 reached maturity. This year, the results are equally bad. The Kent W.A. knows of 50 eggs taken by carrion crows, foxes and cats, with 4 sitting duck killed, and of approximately 110 ducklings, only 22 are alive at the time of writing and carrion crows have been seen taking them off the water.

Potentially, these waters are excellent reserves and as the association now has permission for vermin control, over all the surrounding farmland, the future results will be most instructive.

New Nature Reserves

Three new Nature Reserves have been announced by the Nature Conservancy. They are Rodney Stoke Woods, on the southern escarpment of the Mendip Hills, and the best example of a Mendip ashwood existing today; the woods and cliffs at Coed Treinadoc where ravens and peregrines nest, and the Cwm Du portion of Craig Cerrig Gleisiad in Breconshire.

Beating the Drought

I hear from the Balnagown Estates Co. that the new dam at the head of the Upper Oykel is now operating successfully. In future a reserve of five hundred million gallons of water will be available for use down the River Oykel during dry spells. This dam has raised the level of Loch Ailsh by three feet, which has destroyed the weed and greatly improved fishing conditions in the loch. Salmon and sea trout are ascending the fish pass without hindrance.

The total catches for the season so far on Balnagowan waters are 609 salmon, 15 sea trout and 650 brown trout.

Norwegian Salmon

I understand that salmon fishers have had a good season in some of the Norwegian rivers this year. Three Danes, who were fishing in the Namsen River, north of Trondheim, caught thirty-two salmon in ten days. The largest was a 50-pounder and was four feet long. In the Tana River in Finnmark a 13-year-old boy caught a 45-pounder, which he had to fight for nearly two hours before it could be landed.

A Policeman's Lot

A fortnight ago I commented, rather lightheartedly I fear, on the adoption of a new type of helmet by the Suffolk police. I am reassured by a reader from the Sudbury area, who encloses a cutting from a local newspaper to prove it, that non-shine helmets with dark fittings will still be worn by constables on night duty, so that those delighting on a shiny night will have no warning reflection on which to rely. My correspondent adds the news that pheasants are very forward in his district and that broods average about six in number.

AUCEPS.

Hare today and gone tomorrow!

MORE ABOUT HARES

by Tower-Bird

HEAVEN alone knows why I have chosen to write about hares this week, when those curious creatures are mainly hidden from view in crops spurting upwards after the recent heavy storms. Perhaps it is because a train of thoughts and memories was loosed yesterday when I saw a hare down the marshes —a comparatively rare sight in my immediate neighbourhood, though, across the river, I have heard the music of running beagles from time to time. Anyway, here goes, and I believe that most shooting men, even those who do not care a great deal about shooting hares, are always interested to read about them.

In those years between the wars, when I lived in the vicnity of the Berkshire downs, on a 3,000-acre shoot where we could kill up to five hundred hares during a winter day's hare drive, there was a period of the year when few hares were found on the coarse-grass, juniper-besprinkled slopes of the downs, and we knew that they had "moved" to the lowland arables, where they remained hidden in growing crops. I often wondered exactly how and at what time o' the clock these migrations took place, reckoning they were likely to occur over a matter of weeks, hares, in small or larger parties (probably in follow-m'-leader style) moving quarters during the night.

Then, on a morning when I met an old ex-roadman over a pint of ale (the thankful receiver in those days and parts always insisting that the generous donor "took the top"—i.e. had a good swig from the mug or glass first, before passing it back), I heard a story which sometimes I rather doubt, and sometimes consider may be correct. The old man had, a few years before this meeting, been roadman along one side of the shoot, and almost every Saturday morning when his "stint" brought him to our border, I held converse with him, and many a pheasant and partridge nest he told me about, and much incidental, though useful, information came from him.

Those Mornings After!

On this morning of our meeting, the conversation eventually got round to hares, as it usually does when downland men meet. He reminded me (not that I ever need reminding of them!) of those mornings after our big hare shoots, when, suffering from heads that ached and opened and shut due to the celebrations of the previous evening (carried well on into the night) it was our job to pack up the hares in hampers ready for the carrier's cart to call for them and take them to the station, where they would be labelled for Leeds, game prices being higher in the "north." In fact, all our game was sent there. Even the strictest of teetotallers would blanch on opening the door of a shed in which hundreds of hares have been hanging all night; for the stench is not exactly Attar of Roses.

Well, our old roadman talked of this and that matter concerning hares, and then went on to tell me (as he had told me on several occasions in the old days) how he had seen the hares leaving the downs well after their courting time. "Most of them crossed the road as soon as I started work in the morning, round about 7 o'clock," he said. He used to watch a hare, perhaps followed by another, or maybe four or five, "trickle" across the road at the foot of the downs, follow on unhurriedly across the open Flats (where there was little cover as a rule, and nearly always some fallow), wend their way up the side of B——— Hill, "and I knowed they went down the far slope and across the A——— road," he added, "for I was working that length on Mondays and used to see the same thing—them old hares coming over and off B——— Hill, cross the A——— road, and gallop slowly down the gentle slope of Mr. N's land. You know where they went to then; a lot stayed there, but a lot went on to your N.M. farms."

Migration In Reverse

Some days in that period he would see only maybe a dozen to a score of hares leaving the downs. At others, he had seen as many as fifty to sixty. He could tell by the way they were "running" that they were not just out on the spree, but off down to the farms for a month or two. Then again, as soon as the binders started getting to work on the early crops, he would see this movement, this "trickle" of hares, going into "reverse." Now they would be leaving the farms over the course of days or weeks, making back to the high downs, in spite of the fact that there might be comparatively little cover there, the summer sun and the nibbling sheep having made the downland slopes resemble a burnt-up prairie.

Looking back now on those times, I think it quite possible that the old man's observations and deductions were sounder than we once thought them. We knew that the hares did leave the downs, but we had always thought that the movement was something after the form of a nocturnal mass migration, or at least one lasting only a matter of a few nights.

Early Frosts Meant Death

When the first frosts sparkled on the young clover, we went our rounds with some trepidation, for while the sight of a few dozen hares lying dead about the downland slopes and the arable acres was bad enough, in some years there were literally scores and scores of dead hares to be seen. My old friend Douglas Middleton, now the Great White Chief of I.C.I. Game Research Station at Fordingbridge, was then working with the Bureau of Animal Populations at Oxford, and I invited him over to investigate this annual dying-off of hares. The answer was simple—coccidiosis; similar to the common "spotted-liver" trouble with rabbits. When "the boss" had first taken over this shoot, we had found that the male population of hares were suffering seriously from syphilis, so we concentrated on killing off quantities of jack hares, using their flesh for baited traps, etc.

But enough of downland hares; let us away to lower country. Most of us who go fowling have seen hares far out on the saltings, where they seem to enjoy themselves, but, personally, I have only once seen one swim a wide creek, and that was because its normal retreat had been cut off by the dog I then owned ranging far ahead of me. But Puss is a good swimmer, and by no means averse to "messing about in marshland." She is not frightened of getting her feet, or her fur wet.

Often enough, when I had a shoot along the water-meadows of the upper Thames I flushed hares from a form among the reed-tussocks of little islands far out in the flood-water. Off would run our hare, galloping and leaping slowly through shallow water; sometimes jumping runnels; occasionally swimming broader drains. I wrote years ago how one such "stranded" hare tore off across shallow floods throwing up water behind and all round it, and how, on this particular occcasion, the sun was shining, and the flying spray was turned to rainbow colours, so that it seemed that the fleeing beast was running under a moving miniature rainbow.

Edward Step, in his "Animal Life of the British Isles," published in 1921 (Warne) states of the hare: "He is a good swimmer, and often crosses rivers in order to reach a better feeding ground, to avoid pursuit, or to seek a mate. Hares have been known to cross the Trent in numbers, where it was two hundred yards wide, in order to reach a field of carrots on the further side; and Yarrel saw one cross an arm of the sea a mile broad."

Hares do not often go to ground, unless, of course, hard-pressed, though rabbit burrows are hunting-grounds and sanctuary for many other creatures—foxes, cats, rats, stoats, weasels, winged pheasants and partridges, brown and little owls, nesting shelduck, etc., etc. But only on two occasions (except when out with beagles) have I come across hares taking cover below ground. On the first occasion I was fishing, when chancing to look round, I was amazed to see a hare sniffing at a drain-pipe and then quietly vanish down it. It gave me the impression, by the way it was sniffing and behaving generally, that the hare was a jack on the trail of a doe. But I saw no doe and I shall never know why this particular creature went down a short, not-very-wide drain. Being a man of action, as well as a bank-angler (in those days), I quickly threw my coat over the entrance where

(Continued on next page, col. 3)

A long jump over a flooded gutter

Experiments with Partridges

by D. R. L.

THIS is a story which shows the tribulations of an amateur partridge breeder. Little positive information will be gained from this article, but a tremendous amount of negative information may be useful to a would-be breeder.

This man is the manager of a syndicate which shoots over some 1,500 acres, with the help of a part-time gamekeeper. In his first season as manager, in 1954, was the first really bad partridge year. It was obvious that the following year could not be very much better owing to the lack of stock of birds on the ground.

Having read the I.C.I.'s Game Services Yearly Report, he paid a visit to the Game Research Station at Fordingbridge. There he was impressed with the apparent ease with which the I.C.I. were breeding partridges, and he immediately put his name down to be included in the next gamekeepers' course on partridge breeding.

At this course there were eighteen gamekeepers, two farmers, and one amateur.

The course was absolutely first - class. Information was parted with which takes a gamekeeper a life-time to acquire, and he returned home fully convinced that partridge breeding was "on." So sold on the idea was he himself that he was also able to sell the scheme to the members of the syndicate, who agreed to put up the cost of the rearing.

The first thing was to get breeding pens and, having seen the I.C.I.'s ideal model, made of wood, which would have been expensive to construct, the pens were made of weatherproof bardboard, and the size was reduced from the standard size of 10ft. x 5ft. to 8ft. x 4ft. (8ft. being the length of a sheet of hardboard).

The work was carried out by the carpenter's shop of a boys' reform home in the district, which helped to keep the price down.

The next thing to do was to obtain permission from the farmer to use one of his fields as a rearing field, and the ideal site was found close to the farm, where no poultry had ever been run.

Bantams were acquired from local farmers and poultry breeders. Consternation might have been caused if the original letter had gone out with a typographical error ordering "second-hand bantams" instead of "second-year" bantams!

Eggs from the Shoot

Then came the time for collecting the eggs. At this period game farms were not producing partridge eggs and one had to rely on picking up eggs off the shoot. This was a long and tedious job as, owing to the stock being low, there were few nests and a full day's work for three people might only result in one or two nests being found. Fortunately, farm hands were able to save some nests when the hay was cut and some of the nests in dangerous positions were taken.

The first hatching came off amid great excitement and fourteen out of fifteen Frenchmen were born, and other clutches hatched successfully. This seemed all too easy! Then losses started. The bantams appeared to be treading on the chicks and the worst case was where ten out of twelve chicks were killed in this way. These may have beeen weakly chicks which were flattened out after they had died so that the bantam hen may not have been to blame.

Then came another panic. Eggs were coming in and there were no broody bantams. The eggs were put in the farmer's incubator and various methods of bringing these chicks up in brooders were considered. The farmer had a bright idea. After the chicks had hatched they were put in an indoor brooder for four/five days and then transferred to a pen which had an infra-red lamp at one end. Under this method the chicks progressed extremely well and twenty-three out of twenty-five survived.

A wild cock which came courting the hen was trapped.

Then came tragedy. Somebody slammed the door; the power plug jumped out of its socket, and the heat was cut off from the pen. There was an immediate 75 per cent loss.

As this was a new method and, literally speaking, not wishing to put all our eggs in one basket, when the chicks were hatched in the incubator, a clutch was put under a hastily procured broody bantam one evening and the keeper sat with her for some two hours until he was certain that she was comfortable with the chicks under her, but the next morning he found that she had killed the lot.

Chick-killing Bantam

Another hastily procured broody bantam was given a clutch of eggs from the incubator, which were chipping, and she appeared to go down all right, but again, the next morning, it was found that she had killed the chicks immediately after they had hatched. This shows that you cannot hurry nature unduly!

After all these troubles there were approximately fifty chicks which were in the pens, five/six weeks old, and apparently doing well. Then came the terrible storms of last July and August (one particular storm dropped three inches of rain in one hour). Within ten days all but two of the chicks had died. Some of the bodies were sent to the I.C.I. for a post-mortem and the reply was always the same, "congestion of the lungs, probably caused by damp." The rain had been continuous and the chicks had no chance to dry out; also, possibly, the grass in the pens may have been too long.

Our friend was now left with one pair of partridges, which were penned together. As they came from mixed clutches it was not realised that they were "brother and sister" until March, when the hen repelled the cock's advances to the extent of half killing him. They were therefore separated, and then a wild cock came courting the hen, so he was trapped and put with the hen (to their great joy). Egg production started in due course, but after seven eggs had been laid, a dog, unfortunately, broke into the pen and killed the birds.

Another Year's Trial

In the meantime, the members of the syndicate, understanding fellows, had watched these breeding attempts and agreed that as there had been so much bad luck and bad weather, the breeding should be given another year's trial.

In this current season the enthusiastic amateur partridge breeder is carrying on and at the moment some 133 eggs are "under." These came from various sources, such as the neighbouring farmers who had cut up and salvaged nests, and one clutch came from a famous royal golf course, so now there may be some royal partridges coming over.

It is interesting that although approximately the same stock was left in 1956/7 as in the previous year, there were fewer nests found this year. This may be due to the fact that nesting time the corn was well forward and the partridges may have chosen the corn for better cover than the hedges.

The weather has been perfect for breeding, with practically no thunderstorms, and the part - time keeper has worked all the hours possible. If only to reward his efforts, one hopes that the syndicate will have something to shoot at this coming season.

More About Hares

(Continued from previous page)

I had last seen the hare, scrambled over the drain-top for three yards, and rolled a large stone over the other end. Then I retrieved my coat, and fixed another large stone over that end, and went to cut a stout briar from the hedge. This had soon twisted itself into the hare's jacket, and after quite a struggle, and several false tugs, I managed to grab him out and dislocate his neck.

The other occasion was when I saw a dog chase a hare into an enlarged rabbit hole, and happening to be ferreting at the time, I dropped a net over the wide hole and entered a ferret at the far end. I had that hare in double quick time, but didn't she kick! She even tore the sound net in two places.

A friend told me once how, when ferreting a fairly large burrow in a wood, his ferret bolted a hare, after the former had been to ground for more than ten minutes. Without any warning, the hare popped out of a hole that was of normal size and would have galloped off through the wood, had not a charge of shot from a .410 caught it in the back of the head.

My friend's theory was that probably a hunting dog or fox had caused the near-done-in hare almost to squeeze down the rabbit burrow—probably not far down. Then, by a strange coincidence, my friend had ferreted this particular burrow, and his ferret had driven out the hare.

AROUND AYLESBURY

by J. Ivester Lloyd

WHY is it that some districts, more than others, seem to produce the type of men and women that we describe as "characters," meaning the term as a compliment? Is it the air, the soil, or the surroundings? Or do real characters attract others of like kind?

I am thinking, naturally, just now of this district where, except for the war years, I have spent the past thirty years, this corner of England, this slender waist of Bucks, where it is but a step into Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire and a short ride into Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire. Most of the district comes within that vague area so delightfully dubbed the Vale of Aylesbury.

Aylesbury itself is, of course, the county town of Bucks and, despite several thriving industries, remains a pleasant old market town which, besides its famous ducks, is noted for cream cheese and good printing—and also, to my mind, for some of the best genuine pubs in England. I choose the word "pub" because I want it to include hotels, inns, taverns, all forms of what are termed "licenced premises." There is even one with a farrier's smithy attached to it, and in most of them, on market day, you can meet the finest collection of weatherbeaten faces and independent minds in the world, even now and then, a genuine Aylesbury nose.

It was in the King's Head on a market day that I drank last with "Uncle" Pitcher, and we had what Jorrocks called a "strong talk on 'unting." I remember it well, because the following day, and with very short notice, poor old "Uncle" went to a distant meet, to hunt in fact with Orion and his hounds in the Elysian fields.

White Ties in the Dairy

"Uncle" Pitcher it was who used to stand with others of the committee on the steps of the Town Hall to welcome us to the Aylesbury Farmers' Ball. "Very pleased to see you, my boy, and," with a courtly bow, "You, too, I'm sure, Miss!" It was after one of these dances that a party of us went back with Joe Roads to his farm at Broughton where we drank whisky and ate sausages and eggs and bacon and so on until it was milking time and then some of us, white ties, tails and all, went out and helped Joe with his milking, and when it was time to go home, Bill Bradley found that his car was bogged down.

To the north of Aylesbury is the village of Oving from which you can look right down the vale to the blue line of the Chiltern Hills. Here it was that I brought my father by car so that he might paint the portrait of a hunter belonging to Major Gerald Pratt, a dapper, self-confident little man who wore tight trousers and a brown bowler with the bow astern. He had won, amongst many others, a steeplechase on a horse belonging to the Earl of Orkney who lived at Stewkley, not far away. When the Earl asked him which he would like as a present, a dozen of champagne or a tantalus, Gerald replied, "Give me the bubbly. What would I do with a ruddy serpent, anyway?"

Within a very few minutes of our arrival at his home, Major Pratt had pointed out that he had the finest terriers, the finest horses and the finest cats in the world. "And they're Manx cats," said I, proud to display my knowledge. "Nothing of the sort, my boy!" snorted the Major. "I didn't like the way they carried their tails, so I manxed them."

Nearer my own home is the tiny village of Ledburn and here, at the Manor, until a short while ago, there lived a family through whom I saw more sport, knew more laughter, and was treated to more scares than with any other I have known. The head of this family, "Tiny" Edmunds, was a giant of a man with a profound knowledge of bloodstock and of sporting prints, while his handsome wife, who could have gone into one of Tiny's pockets, was one of the best lady riders to hounds in the country. There were also three sons.

In the last war, the eldest of these sons became a Major, the second a Wing-Commander and the third, the greatest friend I ever had, was lost from his submarine. I used to sail with those boys, sometimes with all three, sometimes with two, and often only with Dicky, the youngest, in their cutter off the east and south coasts or into such fascinating rivers as the

They treed him up a telegraph pole . . .

Deben and Orwell. Now, I had been a professional sailor and had a profound respect for the elements, so the risks those lads took quite terrified me; fear was a word which was not included in their vocabularies.

Mrs. Edmunds owned and bred bloodhounds, huge, slobbery, black-and-tan brutes with long, pendulous ears, slack dewlaps and voices like the knell of doom. With these, we used to hunt Man on Sunday afternoons, Dicky carrying the horn and I whipping-in to him. Our quarry was a farmworker or one of his two sons who, for half-a-crown and a pint of "black beer" would run until he was caught by about ten couples of hounds, and the only risk he incurred was that of being bowled over as the pack tried to show their affection for him. Occasionally, things did not go as planned, as on that week-day when we were exercising and the bloodhounds changed on to the line of a rag-and-bone man who was carrying a sack of bones on his cycle. They treed him up a telegraph pole and worried the bones.

A Sharp Riposte

When the scent lay well and the Whaddon Chase Foxhounds were chiming along on the line of a straight-necked fox, Mrs. Edmunds was always in the first flight of the hard-riding field, even when her tragic end was not far off. Seldom did her mounts refuse, but the story is told how, when one *did* refuse at a fence, an unmannerly man called out "Come on, old lady, over, under or through!" Reining in, she looked him up and down out of her very bright eyes. "I know I'm old," said she, "and I hope I'm a lady, but nobody would mistake you for a gentleman in a field full of gipsies!"

So far, I have written chiefly of people of the past, but this district still has a good crop of characters. Men like big Bill Manning, whose fields in spring and summer are worth a hundred mile journey to see, with their population of hunter mares and foals, or his friend Jack Castle who lives not so many miles away.

The Fabulous Nubar

No description of sporting characters of these parts would be right without mention of that fabulous, international figure, Nubar Gulbenkian, who has a house at Hoggeston, right in that wonderful stretch of hunting country between High Havens and Christmas Gorse. With his luxuriant beard and air of benevolent magnificence, one might expect Nubar to ride an Arab stallion while wearing a bejewelled turban and flowing robes. Instead, he follows hounds with the best, mounted on the finest English weight-carrying hunters and his impeccable clothes are topped off with a monocle and an orchid of his own growing. On his first appearance with a local hunt, many years ago, the M.F.H. said "I've never seen an orchid in the hunting field before!" "Well," replied Nubar, smiling; "Have you ever before seen an Armenian in the hunting field?"

Let nobody tell me that the sporting parson is a figure of the past. Only seven miles from here is one who served as a naval chaplain throughout the war, works hard for the welfare of his growing parish and, at the same time, finds time to follow hounds on foot or in his car. I first met Allan Campbell at a naval dinner when he told me that he was a neighbour of mine, then asked if I had any suggestions for popularising his new church hall which had recently been opened by the Bishop.

Thinking to pull his leg, I said "Yes, get the M.F.H. to give a lecture on foxhunting!" To my pleasant surprise, he jumped at the idea and the result was a full house, an enthralling lecture by Dorian Williams and a fat collection for the British Field Sports Society. I later discovered that Allan's wife is closely connected with the Melbreak Foxhounds, a famous Fell pack.

On thinking more about this idea of mine that some districts produce more characters than others, I begin to have my doubts. Perhaps it is just that I have lived in this particular one long enough to know a few of our own.

Forthcoming Field Trials

SECRETARIES OF FIELD TRIAL SOCIETIES ARE INVITED TO SEND US REPORTS OF THEIR TRIALS FOR PUBLICATION IN "THE SHOOTING TIMES." REPORTS SHOULD BE SENT DIRECT TO THE KENNEL EDITOR, MR. P. R. A. MOXON, HERNE COMMON, HERNE BAY, KENT.

July 23 & 24: Irish Setter Association (England) and the Setter and Pointer Club. Shap. Judges: The Earl of Northesk and Mr. P. B. Fletcher (Eire). Joint Secretaries: W. J. Rasbridge, Heatherbank, Ottways Lane, Ashtead, Surrey, and Capt. H. W. Mears, Fellside Keswick, Cumberland.

July 26 & 27: Yorkshire Gundog Club (Pointers and Setters). Secretary: Mrs. E. H. Bailey, Longclose, Bolton Hill, Bessacarr, Doncaster.

July 29 & 30: English Setter Club. Alston, Northumberland. Secretary: Dr. J. B. Maurice, Isbury House, Marlborough, Wilts.

Aug. 1: North of Scotland Gundog Association (Pointers and Setters). Secretary: W. Emslie, 58 Dee Street, Aberdeen.

Aug. 1 and 2: Northern Ireland Pointer Club. On the moors, outside Ballymena. Judges: Mr. T. Wilson and Miss Macintosh. Secretary: W. R. Gardiner, 12 Swanston Crescent, Glengormley, Belfast.

The keeper who becomes a woodcutter cannot be expected to help farmers.

Round the Game Preserves

by David Imrie

IN those districts where estates have been broken up and game preservation discontinued one is apt to wonder how the farmers have fared without those unpaid, and often unacknowledged, services which they received formerly from the keepers. This thought occurred to me the other day, when I heard of a farmer who had been annoyed by the depredations of carrion crows among his young poultry. In this case the estate is still intact; but owing to several factors, including myxomatosis, the keeper is doing woodcutting work. So, although the unfortunate farmer made an indirect appeal for his help, according to custom, he did not get it. Obviously the ex-keeper could not leave his new job, any more than a gardener, a forester, a mason, or a butler to oblige a harassed farmer. To do so would not be business; and I am quite sure that the farmer would have been astonished and indignant, if the squire had asked him or his men to do an estate job gratis.

This habit once common on well-keepered estates of giving help from the game department to farmers when they were plagued by vermin was undoubtedly of some benefit to game, if the vermin happened to be killers or egg-stealers. But this service was often taken for granted, and the keepers were sometimes asked to scare pigeon and rooks from newly-sown and newly-cut corn, or from sprouting green crops. Indeed, I have known farmers who believed that they were absolutely entitled to invoke the aid of a keeper when they were pestered by pigeon and rooks; and I remember vividly how a hired man arrived one evening at my door long before the war to tell me in a hectoring fashion that rooks were plundering some seed corn, and that I had better be doing something to remedy this disgraceful state of affairs. The really irritating part was that this hired man's boss had a gun, which he could use well enough when he had the inclination to do so. Therefore, I told the messenger to clear out.

Honorary Duty

On several occasions about the same period farmers have arrived in person to announce that pigeon were playing the devil with crop of some sort. Would I go along as quickly as possible to give them a shot? Needless to say, I generally did my best for the agriculturists. I killed a few pigeon, then hung them conspicuously on sticks, mainly to show that I had complied with their wishes; for pigeon are not always scared from a chosen field by this device. I have even risen early in the morning to perform this honorary duty. The cartridges were, of course, supplied by the squire along with the rest of the obligement.

Someone may ask why keepers bothered to do these apparently profitless jobs for farmers, when they might have been doing jobs of more value to game. The answer is that they were done to maintain goodwill on the estate, so that game might benefit ultimately. Whether this end was achieved or not depended on the farmers. The better types might remember these services when game chicks were in danger at hay or corn cutting times, or when shady characters asked permission to rabbit on their land; the others simply did not bother with anything so sloppy as gratitude. And it is also true that many of the selfish ones did not realise that they ought to give some return for services rendered. Familiarity as far as they were concerned had bred indifference, if not contempt.

Most Important Job

In pre-war times, however, probably the most important job performed free by keepers was the destruction of rabbits in summer which were living entirely on agricultural land. At this time of the year those families of conies in hedgerows and river banks could do quite a lot of damage among growing crops. They were, and still are, particularly undesirable beside fields of turnips, swedes, and kale, because damage among those crops is likely to be permanent. Therefore, keepers generally came to the rescue before the threat became serious, and all was well. I have spent weeks and weeks pushing into overgrown hedges and other thickets in search of occupied burrows while the sun beat down mercilessly and clegs competed with each other for my blood. There was no fun at all in this work. Traps could hardly be set in the baked ground. Pegs were difficult to drive in, and the dusty soil ran under the plates like quicklime.

The importance of this work formerly undertaken by keepers can be gauged accurately when one considers that hardly anyone else could have been found to do it. The casual rabbiters who operated in winter for profit were not interested in unsaleable rabbits, and few farmers were willing to engage and pay a professional trapper. Furthermore, the farmers themselves had seldom the knowledge or the inclination to eradicate rabbits when cover was abundant.

Nowadays this summer problem on agricultural land has taken on another significance even where keepers are still available. The official designation of clearance areas has undoubtedly altered the relationship between farmers and keepers as far as rabbits are concerned, and I should not be in the least surprised if some landowners refuse to permit their keepers to pull the neglectful farmer's chestnuts out of the fire; or if they do permit them to do so, they may expect some cash return for their service, which is business. For both owners and farmers are liable to be prosecuted under the Pests Act, if they allow rabbits to increase.

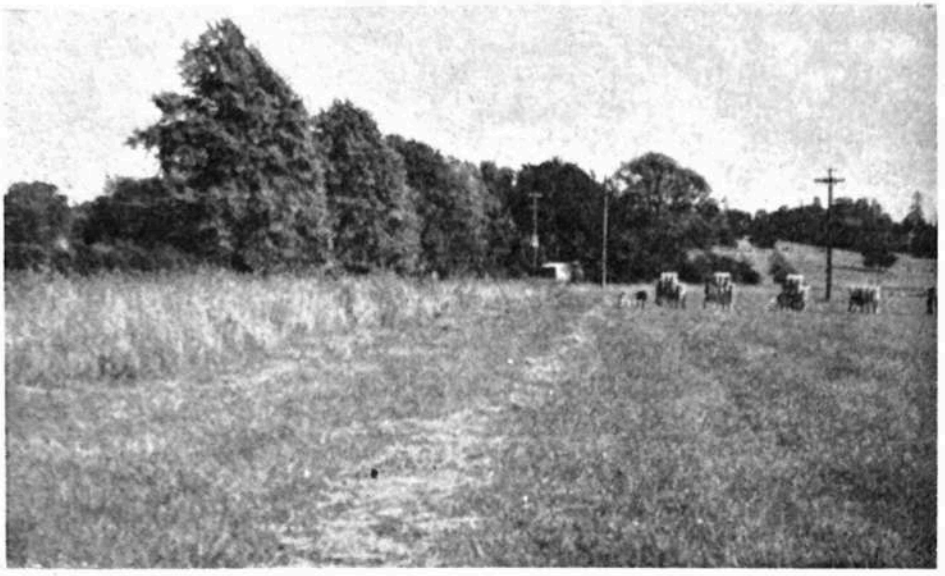
Rabbit Re-Infestation

We must bear in mind that landowners are philanthropists only occasionally. Although they allowed their keepers to kill unsaleable rabbits formerly in summer, which were living entirely on agricultural land, they expected, in addition to the goodwill of their tenants, a certain number of saleable rabbits later in the year to pay for the keepers' wages. There was a sort of give and take in this arrangement. The farmers, for instance, might not worry unduly about rabbits that came from in-hand land on to permanent pastures, so long as their vulnerable crops were protected. But under a legal system which theoretically permits no-one to make money from the destruction of rabbits each man must shoulder his own responsibilities.

Actually it would be a wise move on the part of tenant farmers, if they agreed to pay their landlords a lump sum per annum as an insurance against rabbit re-infestation. The keepers have the tackle, they are right on the job, and they have an interest in reducing rabbits to the lowest possible number. The only snag that I can see might come from the farmers themselves. The tighter-fisted ones could make the keepers' lives a misery, if they conceived the idea that they had authority over their movements. But even this potential nuisance could be eliminated, if the landlords drew up proper written agreements at the outset to compel the tenants to present their rabbit complaints first at the estate office, so that orders might be issued only from that source to the keepers.

People who farm their own holdings, or who are not on a bigger estate, will just have to struggle on in a haphazard fashion against rabbits. If they have no rabbit catching ability, their best plan where burrows are accessible would be to put a spoonful of gas powder in every open hole, then close it up securely. But if the burrows are not accessible, or the rabbits are lying out in difficult cover, they might have to consult the area pests officer, who would, if necessary, get Ministry rabbiters on the job. This procedure is apt to reduce the farmers' bank balance, of course; but that initial loss is better than a prosecution, although it will have to be faced again some time in the future.

Unfortunately for casual shooters this warfare against rabbits is not likely to increase their chances of sport. Even if they found an estate where the landowner had forbidden his keepers to kill rabbits on rented farmland, it does not follow that the tenants have any greater shooting rights than they had formerly. And in any case, the farmer nowadays who has sufficient rabbits to provide sport of a worthwhile kind is heading for trouble.



A useful strip of cover left by the baler.

The Young Shot

The Morning Watch

by Petrel

OUR small country clique or sporting foursome—which gives you the clue to exactly how many members compose our daily commuters' class—is understandably glad of the inconvenience caused by the absence of an early rising paperman. This means that for the best part of six miles we are denied the opportunity of reading the misdoings of a wicked world and have to content ourselves with peering from the train window and passing occasional comments, until the time comes for the duty paper-fetcher to leap from his seat at the first and only major stop, run at least the best part of a couple of chains and suffer the final embarrassment of asking for the "usual and a 'Woman'" on at least one day per week.

Others who have by now already completed the crossword or savoured the full horrors of the daily crime pity our type-starved compartment, but they, of course, are by no means of like mind. With so much to see and talk about on that pre-paper stretch, we are unconcerned.

From a train window the passing countryside becomes a surprisingly open book, for wildlife which would normally take cover at the equally close approach of a pedestrian, takes no notice at all of the Hungerford Flyer as it sways and rattles northwards. In consequence it is not unusual to see a hen pheasant and her brood perched on the railings at the end of a country station's platform, or to observe the more intimate details in the lives of partridges, hares, mallard etc.

There are the comedies; the hare galloping flat out through a standing flock of black-faced sheep and then suddenly finding herself face to face at almost ground level with the dusky visage of the one sheep that was lying down. Without pausing in her stride, she leaped to one side, corkscrewed in mid-air, and tore back through the hedge the way she had come.

Robbery With Violence

There are the tragedies too; as witness the systematic subtlety and cold cunning of a pair of crows luring a lapwing away from her nest and then stealing her eggs. Whenever this is noticed, as it all too often is along our valley, where the farmers seem to turn a blind eye to nesting crows, one of my fellow travellers invariably downs the window with a crash and lets fly a stream of discouragement guaranteed to singe the feathers of any crow, but its effectiveness is purely temporary. That is, at least, as far as the crows are concerned. It is more than likely the reason why our compartment rarely suffers invasion during the rest of the trip.

It is interesting to speculate on the interest in game preservation which is taken in various tracts of land along the route. All the shooting is either let or reserved, that I do know from previous enquiry, but how much trouble the various sporting owners or tenants take to maintain or improve their preserves is largely apparent to the train-bound observer.

Vermin Poles and Policy

The first sign of a well run shoot is the absence of vermin, and in several places the results of efficient keepering, be it amateur or professional, are evidenced by the rotting remains which hang from trees and fences. In these days of extreme sentimentality and antagonistic "anti" action, it is considered impolitic to display groaning vermin poles to the public gaze, but providing the vermin "larder" does not again become, as once it may have been, a competitive collection, with contributors adding to it irrespective of the harmlessness of some of the victims, it would be no bad thing for game preservation if neighbour vied with neighbour in predator reduction.

When game birds decline the modern trend seems to be to appoint counters and ringers and markers at great expense of time and money, and then issue long statistical statements which get us no further forward fast.

By counting predator and active keeper numbers compared with better days, and then taking the appropriate action, it seems to me that some of the expert statisticians would save much time and energy in arriving at a conclusion which those of us actively interested in game preservation have appreciated ever since we could use our eyes. There is a law against harbouring rabbits which should apply at least to all the corvine tribe.

In somewhat ironic contrast to the negligent approach to vermin, this haytime a little more concern has been shown for the welfare of young and nesting game. Where once patches of grass left standing marked an awkward spot for the machines, these little oases of seeding greenery now denote the presence of a nest avoided by some sharp eyed tractor driver. In some fields strips of grass a few feet wide have been left standing throughout the length or breadth of the meadow and I wager that if anyone were to enquire more closely, he would find that the shoot boundary was not far distant from them. These patches of rough cover will serve a useful purpose later, being thick enough to hold a covey or a running cock or hare which would otherwise not have stopped before reaching the ground next door.

Here and there a bale or two of hay stand apparently abandoned for no reason on a headland. Look again, and the reason becomes apparent. The neighbouring field is down to corn, with patches already laid by wind and rain or where the corn is weak through some fault in the soil, and the nearby bales will provide a splendid hide as soon as the pigeon descend upon the flattened grain—which to judge from its colour and the weather, will be any minute now.

Club Comments

If you look hard enough, then, you will see, if you have a shooting man's instinct — or imagination — that some of these apparently neglected fields are, in fact, being tended and prepared for the game harvest. More obvious are the activities of the anglers who fish the river and canal which run for much of the way parallel with the line. Paths cut beside the water and trimmed bays and bushes on the banks make for easier access to the stream and mark favourite swims, while brand new black and white notices proclaiming "Private Fishing," have been nailed to many a gate and pollard willow.

They bring a snort of wrath from my back-to-the-engine neighbour, who identifies with them the restrictive practices of club rights and hates what he calls organised sport which he claims is synonymous with clubs. "Look what they've done to the Thames," he cries; "Once we could fish in peace, but now there's hardly a yard that's not rented by a club and you're lucky if you can get a ticket to fish there. I suppose it will soon be the same with shooting—or at least what's left of the 'free' shooting."

We can, I think, all appreciate his viewpoint, and to some extent sympathise, but when we look again at the derelict stretches of weeded water, neglected by owner or tenant, or denied, through selfishness, to individuals; when we see potentially good shooting grounds suffering from apathetic or impecunious owners, and when, at the same time we consider the expense involved in putting sporting rights to rights, we should, after all, perhaps be grateful to those clubs and organisations, large and small, which have the initiative, power and money to restore and improve shootings and fishings for the immediate benefit of their members and the ultimate benefit of all.

There is only one stipulation which I would make, and this applies not to private clubs or syndicates, but to those larger organisations concerned with the preservation of traditionally "free" coastal shooting. They should be open to all, without waiting lists, for otherwise they defeat their object and become, quite wrongly, closed shops or cliques—just like our assertive 7.55 a.m. quartet, using public transport.

Two Men and a Boat

by G. K. H.

HAVING built and successfully used a small craft for our fowling activities the previous season, Brian and I were determined to build a more substantial one for the end of the 1956-57 one. We discussed it at great length, consulted several plans and eventually decided to wait until after the Boat Show, lest we should see a ready-made one to suit out needs and pockets. But from our point of view the Show was a disappointment, we saw nothing suitable at our price.

On the train home, we finally decided upon which plan to work; it would be a car-top dinghy, 10ft. 9in. long with 4ft. beam, suitable for rowing, or outboard. It would weigh approximately 100lb., and total cost, including screws, glue and paint would not exceed £15. We would share the work and expenses, as we were to share the advantages and, we hoped, the success that she would bring us.

The next day, the timber was ordered. Unfortunately, our requirements were not in stock, and we were told that we must wait ten

A boat in the making.

days for delivery. When it was ready for collection, we had a little over two weeks in which to complete the job before the season ended.

Our first step was to draw all the frames (fourteen of them) full size, on paper. We used decorator's ceiling lining paper for this. The fact that Brian is an engineering draughtsman made this job quite straightforward.

We then had to transpose all the frame dimensions on to the timber. This was specially selected straight-grained Douglas fir for the frames, chines, sheer battens and in-whales. Mahogany was chosen from the steam, breasthook, and knees etc.

A Lawn No Longer

The first weekend's work saw fourteen sets of frames cut out and planed. These were screwed and glued together during the following evenings. We had no workshop big enough in which to build our boat, so all assembly work had to be done outside on the lawn. which, incidentally, resembles a lawn no longer. Work in the evenings was carried out by the light of headlamps. A shelter was rigged up with poles and a ricksheet borrowed from a farmer friend to contend with the wet weather. In this fashion we completed the main structure by the second weekend, and saw for the first time what the lines of our craft looked like. We were encouraged.

Five evenings and a Saturday morning were left to complete her. Although it was a "rush" job, nothing was sacrificed, and no slipshod work was done. We had decided to sheet her in with 3/16in. thick oil-tempered hardboard. This was recommended for boating-building by the manufacturers, and being cheaper than marine ply was our obvious answer. Having made templates from old linoleum off the framework, we cut the hardboard one evening indoors — Brian's wife being led to believe that sawdust was good for the carpet!

Great care had to be exercised in fitting the sheets, for a leaky boat would have resulted. This took considerable time, as there were endless holes to drill and countersink. Screw spacings had to be watched carefully, for once the sheeting was on we could not see inside the boat as it was built upside down. We could not turn the boat over until finally completed, as the framework was constructed on and temporarily attached to a keelform, which, in turn, was attached to baulks of timber anchored to the ground. This made a rigid base on which to work. The keelform played an important part in the assembly, as it held all the frames in their correct position and the keelson to its true form.

When the sheeting-in was completed, Brian's wife was persuaded to give the outside of the boat a coat of paint, which enabled us to lift it off the keelform the following evening. The right way up it looked even bigger than we had visualised. We stood back to admire her; it was hard to realise that this was the result of only two weeks' spare-time work. Finally, we had to secure the keel from the inside and fit the breasthook, inwhales, stern knees, flooring and seats. A coat of paint inside was out of the question, and with no ceremony and in great haste we attached the nameplates. At least she would not go afloat unnamed. We called her Anas Penelope, our favourite duck.

Launched in Freshwater

By 4 p.m. on the Saturday of the last weekend, all was ready. Hastily we carried her out to the car and put her up on to the roof. Here we had great luck, for she sat there snugly as if moulded to it. A piece of sacking under each side, a stout rope fore and aft to the two bumpers; another rope amidships was fastened to each rear door handle and all was ready.

We had found an oar the previous season washed up on the saltings, and had made another to match it. A pair of rowlocks we made from ½in. brass rod. It is our policy not to buy anything if it can be made. Indeed, with limited incomes it is necessary to improvise and get down to the job youself if one's objectives are to be realised.

After bidding our wives goodbye we started the journey to the coast with care. For our load was precious to us and we were not too sure how efficient the lashings would be. However,, they remained quite rigid, and at the end of the twelve mile journey it had not moved at all. We arrived just in time to don our gear and take up positions for the evening flight. This, however, did not materialise, and we assumed the fowl were holding out until the moon rose. This proved to be the case.

Returning to the car we provided ourselves with a meal prepared on our little gas-stove (portable). Our thirst and hunger satisfied and feeling fit for anything, we unlashed the boat from the roof of the car. Having missed the afternoon tide we could not launch her until the next one at 2.30 a.m. We wanted to test her thoroughly before setting forth on the deep, so we carried her over the sea-wall on to a freshwater dyke. Here we spent several hours in her. She rode beautifully on this unruffled water, and her maiden voyage was undertaken without hitch or mishap. A few minor seepages were noticed through the transome seams, but we had come prepared for this. The gas-stove was put into service to heat a soldering-iron, with which we melted bitumen into the leaky spots, having first scraped a cavity in the seams with a penknife. This appears to be a good method for caulking seams and we intend eventually to treat every one similarly.

Satisfied all was safe and sound, we carried her back over the wall, dumped her in a reed-bed, and set off to await the moonlight flight. There were quite a few fowl on the move, but light conditions were poor, and we had to be content to just listen to the wicker of wings over —so near but so invisible. Slowly the tide began to flow and more duck were heard, but the light did not improve.

Moonlight Survey

Returning again to the car, we waited until the tide had turned, loaded all our gear into the boat, had a final cup of tea, and pushed off. Our plan was to have a moonlight survey of the many islands in the estuary, and stalk what fowl we could. On the outward journey many islands were covered completely by the high spring tide, causing us to get lost on our return. For in an hour or so the whole seascape changed completely. The current off the end of the islands had to be carefully dealt with, and at one time we were actually moving in the opposite direction to that which we were rowing! Shooting was impossible; a small raft of wigeon were spotted through the glasses, but rose well out of range.

We decided to make for our island base and get dug in ready for the morning flight. This entailed another tussle with the strong current; the tide was now rushing out at great speed. With a struggle we managed to beach the boat safely. After unloading the gear we started hidebuilding. We selected our vantage points, where we had seen many a good morning flight pass over in security, and with a spade which we had brought with us, dug a pit each, comfortably to accommodate our gear and the lower half of our persons. Round the tops of the pits we fastened a coil of pig-netting five feet in diameter. When standing in the pits the netting completely covered the occupants. We gathered vegetation and wove it into the netting. With wire-cutters, an opening was cut and folded down to permit out exit and entry. This could be lifted back in position afterwards. Everything being completed, we made tea and had a predawn breakfast (by moonlight), and then retired to our respective hides to wait the morning flight.

We had quite a long wait, and being rather tired I uintentionally dozed off. I awoke with a start to see a few red streaks in the sky. Had I missed the flight? I kept asking myself. I waited until full daylight and did not see a bird. However, Brian came over to my hide and assured me there had been no flight. As we were feeling rather cold, having sat still for a couple of hours (cold hours they were, too) we took from our provisions two tins of soup and heated it on the gas-stove. Boiling hot soup, hard-boiled eggs, followed by good, sweet, strong tea and a bar of chocolate put new life in to us.

(Continued on page 574, col. 2)

Anas Penelope afloat at last.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters and photographs are invited for this page. They should be as brief as possible, and the names and addresses of senders must be given, though these need not necessarily be published. Correspondence should be addressed to The Editor, The Shooting Times & Country Magazine, 29 Old Bond Street, London, W.1. 'Phone: HYDe Park 2556/2557.

INTRODUCING SPECIES AND RE-STOCKING OF WILDFOWL

Sir,—Although I live in Kent, the last "black-necks" (Canada geese), noticed by me swam into my ken, accompanied by a host of "Gyppies" (Egyptian geese) in Norfolk about two years ago. A friend and I had hoped to spend a day with wild Nature, but the presence of the Gyppies, black-necks and other exotic fowl, plus the bodies of hundreds of rabbits which had succumbed to that foul disease myxomatosis, marred the day.

As "Sea-Pie" so rightly states, the records of rare duck, or for that matter, geese, are now so be-devilled that nothing can be done about them. But it is not yet too late to save the wader and other records which will also become valueless if introductions are persisted in. Indeed, in the course of time, such experiments, if successful, would eventually reduce ornithology to a bastard science.

May wiser councils prevail; if not, one can visualise reading in a text-book of the future something like this: "The British Red Grouse *(Lagopus Scoticus Scoticus)*. Once resident in England, Scotland and Wales only, but during the past century was introduced to all suitable habitats throughout the world. Recently introduced to Mars by the Inter-Planetary Bird-Watching Society where it is suffering a violent plumage change and becoming a dull grey or pummice-coloured bird. This change of plumage is, in part, believed to be due to the species eating lava grit."

GARGANEY,
Kent.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE LANES AND WEED-KILLERS

Sir,—The Gloucestershire County Council have recently sprayed the majority of the roadside verges of our lovely countryside with evil-smelling weed- and grass-killer. As a result, roads and lanes are now ugly and untidy with brown, dead herbage.

The massive broadcasting of these poisonous substances seems to me extremely dangerous. The dust from them could, in my opinion, seriously damage the delicate membranes of the nose, throat, and lungs, and also the dust, getting on to the hands of children, could cause internal inflammation if gaining access through the mouth. Animals may suffer intensely.

Apart from the damage and ill-effects to health, there is also the very important consideration of trade. What visitors would want to motor, cycle, or walk through brown evil-smelling lanes, or spend a holiday in a county that "stinks" of weed-killer?

The beauty of our Gloucestershire lanes is world-famous, and we have always possessed a rich collection of hedge flowers. As a student of herbalism, I am shocked at this vandalism. "He caused grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man."

RICHARD RADCLYFFE,
Lydney, Glos.

INTERNATIONAL SHOOTING

Sir,—May I heartily endorse the sentiments of your leading article of June 28.

It is essential that politicians of all parties should realise that national prestige, which has so important a place in the world today, is gained not only from bigger and better bombs but also from more frequent (or at least some) successes in the fields of international sport. The British Pistol Club was formed to bring such an increase in interest in the sphere of the pistol, but as you rightly say the whole shooting world must alert itself in this matter.

If Great Britain could at least be fully represented at the World Shooting championships at Moscow next year a start would have been made, irrespective of the actual scores obtained.

WILFRID WARD,
Hon. Sec British Pistol Club,
49 Lupus Street, S.W.1.

CHROMED BARRELS

Sir, — The answer to Mr. M. W. Stock's suggestion in his letter to you in your issue for June 21, that British Proof Rules do not permit chromed bores, is that on the contrary quite a number of shotgun barrels with chromed bores have been proved in this country. Indeed, over 500 new shotguns with chromed barrels have been proved at Birmingham alone. All such barrels submitted to proof are treated on their merits, as are all other barrels.

The Proof Authorities did rule in May 1950 (copy of memorandum issued at that time is enclosed), that where an old gun is treated in this way, the barrels would be considered to have been potentially reduced in strength and would require reproof. The memorandum gives reasons for this decision.

R. P. LEES, Proof Master.
The Guardians of the Birmingham Proof House.
Banbury Street, Birmingham 5.

DEFORMED ROE HORNS

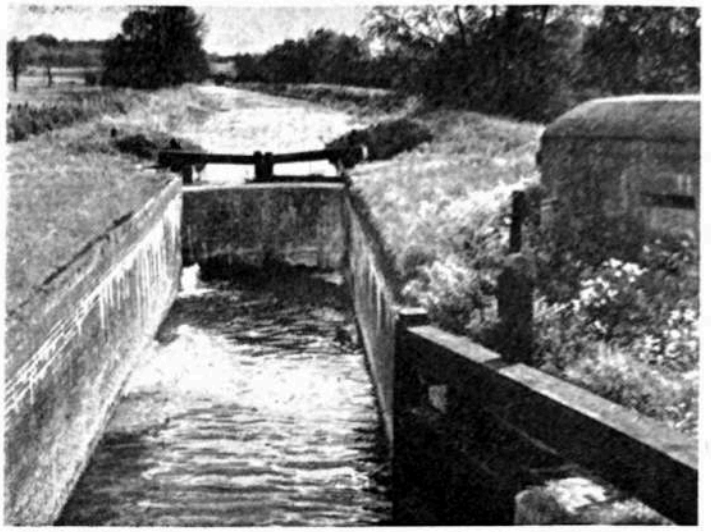
Sir,—I enclose a photograph of abnormal horns of a roe deer, shot in Austria, thinking it might be of interest to readers.

I would also like to ask readers if they have ever heard of *brown* crows

Roe head from Austria.

(*Corvus corone*) being seen in the British Isles. Perhaps one of your many subscribers may have done so. I shot three of them in Austria when I lived there over 20 years ago, and they are exhibited in the Haus der Natur in Salzburg.

F.I.L.
Nottingham.



A wall across the Kennet-Avon Canal at Great Bedwyn, Wilts. (See letter "Canal Wall.")

CANAL WALL

Sir,—A short time ago "Coridon" mentioned a wall that had been built across the Kennet-Avon Canal at Great Bedwyn, Wilts. I enclose a photograph of this wall which may be of interest to readers. As you will see, it completely stops navigation.

R.J.,
Salisbury.

THE SPEED OF BIRDS

Sir,—Being neither a pundit nor a shooter of "mathematicals"—and this I take to be a rather charming and perhaps archaic synonym for "mathematicians"—I have waited breathlessly for a couple of weeks in the hope that someone possessing the necessary qualifications would pick up the gauntlet flung down by Mr. Muspratt in your issue for June 21 last.

Up to date, alas, it seems that no learned Brahmin, versed in the Sanscrit language and the science, laws, and religion of India (for thus my dictionary defines "Pundit"), is prepared to come out into the open and confess wilfully to having murdered any Senior Wranglers. However, as I am prepared to admit to having entertained homicidal thoughts on more than one occasion when endeavouring to cope with the prima donna-like vagarities of "mathematicals" (and various other "boffins"), I may be at least partly equipped to enter the fray.

First of all, I have not personally observed any instances of birds in flight being "easily able" even to keep pace with either railway trains or motor vehicles travelling at between 60 and 70 m.p.h. On the other hand, I have, on many occasions, killed flying birds—ranging in size from sparrows to pheasants—by striking them with the radiator or windscreen of my car when driving at such speeds. Then, too, both as a result of personal experience and for reasons which I shall try to make plain later, I must question Mr. Muspratt's statement that "any bird, even the smallest, can, from a standing start on the roadway, simply 'romp away' from a car going at as much at 74 m.p.h."

As far as birds in flight are concerned, the key to the whole business lies in Mr. Muspratt's expressed conclusion "that ground speeds and air speeds are two entirely different 'entities'." This, of course, is perfectly true—as any aviator, whether feathered or otherwise, knows only too well. The *airspeed* of a bird (or an aircraft) in flight is what is normally quoted when expressing "performance figures" because the *groundspeed* depends upon the speed and relative direction of any wind which may be blowing.

This seems an appropriate moment to indulge in the luxury of one of those things so beloved of "mathematicals"—particularly the members of the tribe who write text books—to whit, "an example":

A bird is maintaining a steady *airspeed* of 30 m.p.h. in level flight, and is heading due north.

The wind, at the altitude at which the bird in question is flying, is blowing from due south at a steady speed of 20 m.p.h.

The bird's *groundspeed*, therefore, is

$30 + 20 = 50$ m.p.h.

If the bird alters course 180 degrees and continues its flight without varying its altitude or *airspeed*, then its *groundspeed* when heading due south becomes

$30 - 20 = 10$ m.p.h.

(By means of a device known as "The Triangle of Velocities" which involves the use of vectors, it is easy to work out the groundspeed of a flying bird under any condition of wind speed and direction provided that both these and the bird's airspeed and heading are known. By the same means, it is possible to calculate, for example, what course the bird would have to steer to make good any given track in any specified circumstances—but this information is probably only of interest to a bird possessing a magnetic compass.)

Now for Mr. Muspratt's statement: "It seems to be agreed that 60 m.p.h. is quite a good airspeed for a bird—at all events shortly before alighting or after taking off." Unfortunately, he does not tell us just what he means by "shortly": he does give a clue later on in his letter, however, when suggesting that few people "can see,

aim and fire at a partridge ("just getting off the mark") in much under one second." Let us assume, therefore, that "within one second" is what Mr. Muspratt means by "shortly."

On this basis, I should say that an airspeed of 60 m.p.h. for a bird "shortly before alighting" clearly indicates that the unfortunate fowl is either attempting an emergency landing in a howling gale or, alternatively, deliberately trying to break its own neck. As far as the "shortly after taking off" case is concerned, a bird blown out of the top of a tree by a hurricane could possibly achieve an airspeed of 60 m.p.h. within one second if it happened to be (a) facing into wind at the moment of being dislodged, (b) capable of developing sufficient thrust to produce an initial acceleration of 5.5 "g" and (c) able to maintain a sustained airspeed of 60 m.p.h.: the bird might also be able to achieve the same airspeed in the same time from a standing start off the ground in zero wind conditions, but this would necessitate a somewhat higher initial acceleration. It does seem, in any event, that such a performance might well merit Sir Winston Churchill's famous tribute, "Some chicken . . . !"

Quite apart from any other considerations, however, it seems doubtful that many birds are, in fact, capable of maintaining sustained airspeeds of 60 m.p.h. The current edition of that excellent little I.C.I. publication "The Shooter's Year Book" prints, on page 14, some notes on the subject of the speeds of travel of various types of game: the actual speeds quoted are specifically referred to as "maximum or hunted"; and, after pointing out "that normal or cruising speeds would be related to the particular activity at the time," it is suggested that "a very hypothetical average speed may be obtained by halving the figures quoted."

In the notes referred to above, the maximum speed of the partridge is given as 53 m.p.h., and that of the "wild duck" as 58 m.p.h. (As a matter of interest, the teal tops the list of birds with a speed of 70 m.p.h., which it shares with the golden plover, and the quail comes well at the bottom with only 34 m.p.h.)

It seems, therefore, that in order to achieve a *groundspeed* of 70 m.p.h. within one second of taking off, Mr. Muspratt's partridge would have to hurl itself into the air with a 5 "g" acceleration, down wind and on a day when the surface wind speed was not less than 17 m.p.h.

As for the mallard, which is suggested to be capable of maintaining "a ground speed of 80 m.p.h. when flighting to feed," even assuming the creature to be so crazed with hunger as to approach its objective in a dive at an airspeed 10 m.p.h. above its credited maximum level flight speed, it will still need to approach downwind—and require a minimum speed of 12 m.p.h. to achieve the target figure.

Finally, sir, I must ask to be excused from commenting upon the speeds of *running* birds: in my view this is a matter which should be left to mathematical-loving dogs.

G. P. SHEA-SIMONDS,
Salisbury, Wilts.

THE ART OF SHOOTING FLYING

Sir, — A recent attack in your correspondence columns upon the old dogma that he who closes one eye cannot expect to shoot as well as he who does not, invites attention to another principle so frequently expressed in axiomatic form that it has become equally dogmatic.

I refer to the statement, repeated *ad nauseam*, that the only effective way of hitting a moving bird with any assurance of success is to "swing through the bird and pull without pausing in the swing." Now is this really so?

To hit a moving target it is necessary only that at the time of pulling the trigger, the gun barrel should be pointing at a spot which will be simultaneously reached by bird and shot. This, in turn, means only that at the time of pulling the trigger the gun barrel must be trained on a point ahead of the bird.

The art of shooting consists of no more than judgment of the appropriate gap between the bird and the point at which the barrel is trained, having consideration to the relative angles of gun and bird and the speed of the bird.

Whether, having judged the appropriate gap, this gap is created by (a) swinging past the bird and pulling without pausing, (b) bringing the gun directly to bear upon the chosen point and pulling immediately, or (c) directing the gun at a point some distance ahead of the bird and pulling when the gap has closed to the required distance, is quite immaterial.

Method (a) is applicable only to a crossing bird in circumstances where unrestricted freedom of movement is possible and it may well be the best method in such circumstances. Nevertheless, the man who cannot use either or both methods (b) and (c) is unlikely to be able to deal effectively with the many birds that offer opportunity in circumstances when a full "follow through" swing is impossible.

As Mr. Jack Collins so wisely said, the secret is "knowing when to pull"; all else is, I submit, academic.

B. S. EVERETT.
Ware, Herts.

WILDFOWL TAXIDERMY

Sir, — In the above article, Dr. Harrison advocates the use of an arsenical preparation for preserving the skins of specimens.

This is rather surprising in view of the fact that 80 years ago, the myth that arsenic was the perfect preservative was exploded by Montagu Browne.

Montagu Browne proved that arsenic did not have the properties claimed for it and branded arsenical mixtures as "the most useless and dangerous mixtures ever invented."

In his book, "Practical Taxidermy," Browne gives his preservative powder which had proved "perfectly efficient for birds and small animals up to squirrel size."

I, personally, have never used this powder, but have used a great deal of the powder recommended for larger animals. This powder is easily obtainable and is absolutely harmless. I used it to preserve the skins of woodpigeon and curlew to be used as decoys. The mixture is simply burnt alum 1lb. and saltpetre ¼lb., pounded and thoroughly mixed.

Although Dr. Harrison advises against using alum, I found this mixture perfectly satisfactory.

Richard Arnold's article in the same issue was very provocative. A military weapon is a beauty in the eyes of its user, only if it outshoots and hits harder than that of his opponent.

Best shotguns, as now made by British makers, will never be superseded. These guns are perfect examples of the highest degree of craftsmanship, and it is the ambition of shooting men all over the world to own at least one of these guns. Surely that speaks for itself.

Sooner than make alterations to these works of art, I suggest that cartridge makers market a cartridge with "homing" pellets and shooters of my ability will not have to clean one barrel before arriving home and showing the bag to their "better half."

STOCKDOVE,
Alnmouth, Northumberland.

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THE PROOF OF THE PUDDING

by Coombe Richards

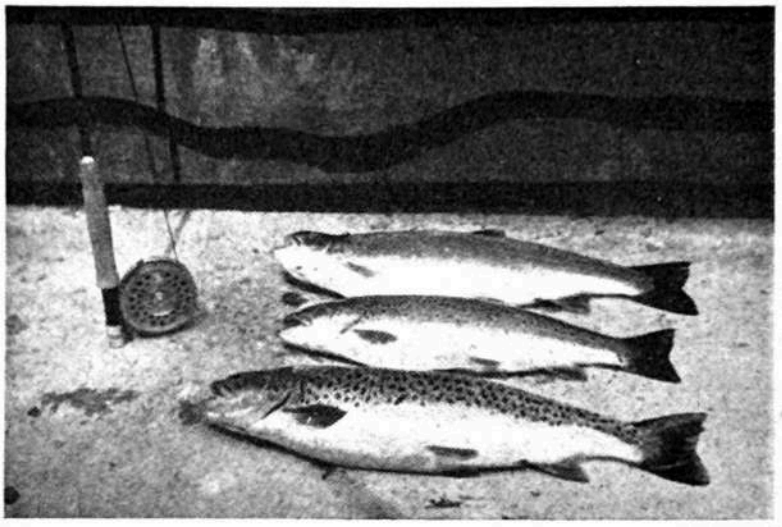
ON December 14 last, I gave in these pages a brief outline of what had been done at The Bristol Waterworks Company's new trout fishery at Chew Valley Lake in Somerset, and even stuck my neck out so far as to prophesy what the angler might have to look forward to when the lake would be opened to the public on May 1 this year. That I was not over-optimistic is, I think, borne out by the facts of what has actually happened to date.

With most of the month of April giving cold brittle weather with the wind coming persistently from either side of north one wondered, naturally, what the Clerk of the Weather had up his sleeve for the day for which so many fishermen from so many places—some even from the other side of the world—had been eagerly awaiting. Bookings for this opening day had been made from as early as January and the first enthusiasts began to arrive at the waterside from 4.30 a.m. onwards. I was not there myself, but have learned of the day from many who were.

The morning dawned soft and misty with the lake glassy calm, but in due course a light wind gently ruffled the surface and, as the mist disappeared, the rods began to appear in force; the N.E. shore (where the breeze was in their favour) proving a particularly popular position. I quote now from a letter received from a friend who was present.

"I was told by the keeper that by 3 o'clock 200 fish had been taken and that there were about 125 rods round the lake.

"The wind was blowing from the north and so we fought in a serried row, about 20 yards apart, and fished the water as hard as we could go on the north bank opposite Denny Island. G., on my right, caught a three-pounder, I didn't get anything, and F. missed three. His son caught two rainbows of 2¾lb. each. We then transferred to the west bank, just short of Woodford Lodge. Here again there was a line of fishermen virtually from the dam to the point beyond the lodge.



Three Chew Valley Lake trout, average weight 3lb. 5½oz., caught from the bank.

Limited Numbers

"G. caught no more; I had five averaging 1lb. 8oz., and F. lost another two. A chap nearby—who never moved all day—had one of 4lb. 5oz., another of 3lb. 12oz., one of 3lb. 8oz., 3lb., and 2¾lb. Someone at Morton Point was reported to have had one of 6lb. 2oz., and others of 5lb. 8oz., 5lb., two of 4lb., and three of 3lb. I shall certainly go again in June; and I hear that the number of tickets issued per day will be limited—a good thing it seems."

Well, that extract will give some idea of what the possibilities actually are. The day, I am given to understand, produced approximately 250 (reported) trout averaging 2lb. 10oz.: one over 6lb., three over 5lb. and more than twenty over 4lb. Three-pounders were common and two-pounders not mentioned!

Incidentally, the regulations regarding the taking of fish are these. The keepable limit is six fish of fifteen or more inches in length, and when these have been taken the angler concerned must stop fishing. He may however, until this figure is reached, retain all other fish netted—and none need be returned. Were his first half-dozen fish all sizeable he would therefore have to cease operations; even though they were taken within the hour.

My first day there this year, early in June, started inauspiciously—the sun blazed down from a cloudless sky and every trout seemed glued to the bottom. By lunch time I had seen only one fish splash and several hours hard flogging had evoked but a single unsuccessful rise. Deeming it more fruitful to laze through the afternoon listening to Peter May and Colin Cowdrey piling up the score at Edgbaston, I hoped for an improvement in conditions and by 4.15 p.m., although the sky remained cloudless, a stiff breeze from the west was whipping the surface and giving at least a chance. With hope renewed I got back to work to meet, under the circumstances, perhaps exceptionally good fortune. Within two and a quarter hours (when a domestic engagement ordained that I should stop fishing) four trout had come to net, a fifth had been lost and a sixth had failed to connect. The four caught were as follows and taken in this order: 3lb. 7oz., 3lb., 2lb. 13oz. and 3lb. 13oz. Needless to say I set off on the sixty-five mile drive home more than well satisfied.

Before leaving the lakeside I met and chatted with two other anglers; one bubbling over with a mixture of chagrin and excitement on account of a solitary monster hooked and lost after a sensational engagement, and the other bewailing the fact that, having seen and done nothing since early morning, he doubted if any fish were present at all. A foolish assumption over which I assured him he was very much mistaken—and then saw his eyes almost pop out of his head as I proved it by opening my fish bass and showing the contents. I doubt if he left the water until very late that night!

Conditions Vary

Chew Valley Lake, like many other large still waters, can reward richly or poorly—just as the mood suits it. A blank day should never discourage the visitor, nor should a good one lead him to imagine that the fishing is "too easy." He must be prepared to meet all kinds of conditions and, so far as is possible, to exploit any chance that offers and to adapt himself to what is taking place at the particular time. If fish are not rising or showing it is obviously of little use to offer the fly close to the surface; it should be sunk—maybe sunk deep—and worked perhaps slowly or fast: trial and error must here be the guide, a nymph, a worm fly, a double-decker lure may be the answer or, if there is a good rise in progress, even the dry fly may prove the killer.

Trial and Error

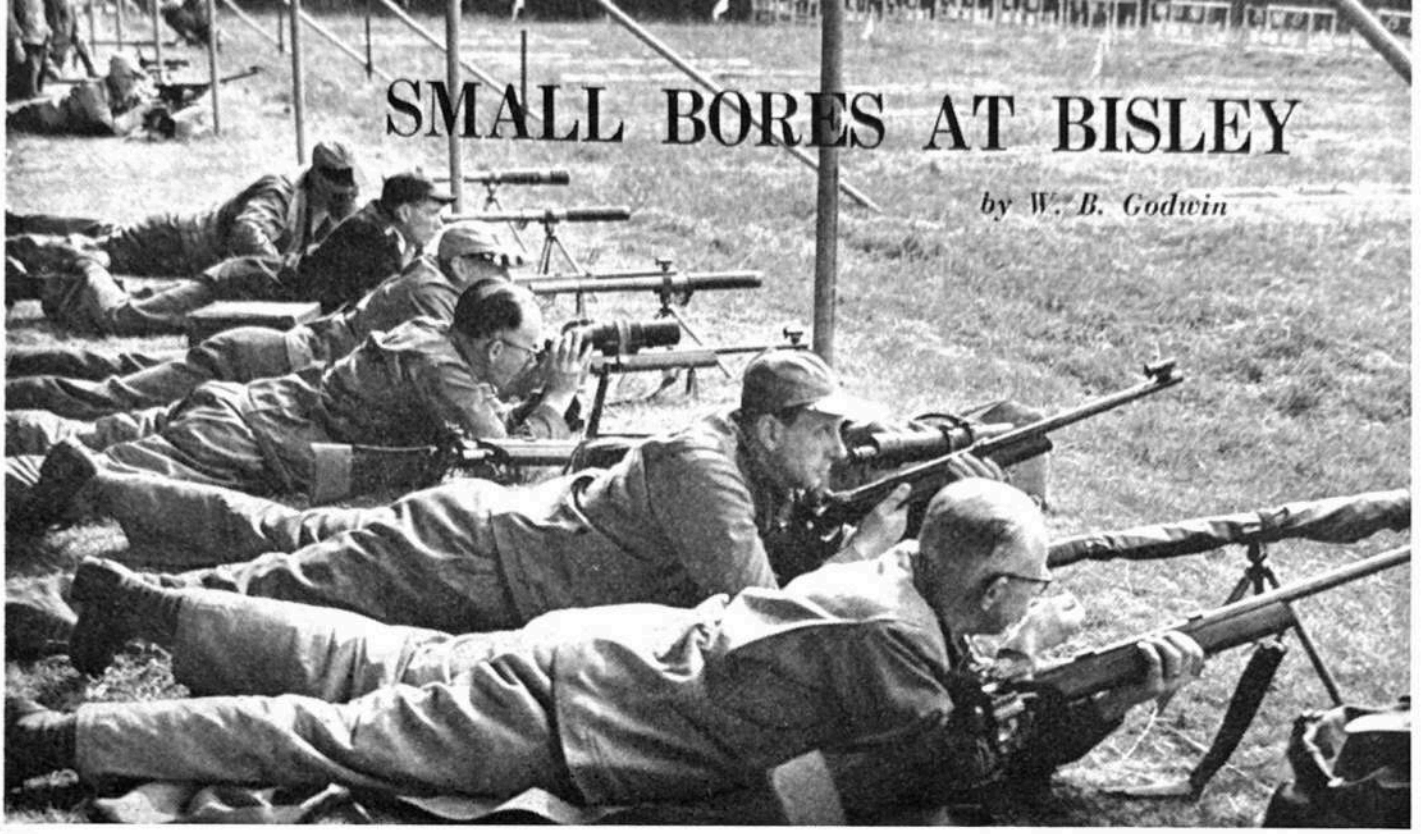
As I look at this type of fishing (and not being a devotee of the very long line fished just along the bottom—rewarding as that can be!) the angler should be open-minded and ready to experiment until he does strike the right course to follow. On the particular outing I have mentioned surface or near-surface fishing proved of no avail; the fish were taken well down whilst the fly was being worked most energetically and a Black Pennell, and a Mallard and Claret seemed the most popular medicine.

And now finally, a word or two concerning the breeding of these magnificent fish for it is a matter of interest to all. The technique now being carried out by the Fishery Staff there is a new one and appears certainly to be highly satisfactory.

Hitherto, normal trout hatchery procedure has been both expensive and, despite experiments with a wide variety of foods, not always completely successful. That put into operation at Chew Valley Lake has gone far to overcome both these serious drawbacks. Below the dam have been built three concrete and parallel troughs through which all or any part of the compensation water, rich in its natural fish foods and of far greater volume than ever possible in any hatchery, can flow as desired. One hundred and fifty feet long and 9 feet 6 inches wide, these troughs or tanks were designed to overcome the fish collecting and screening problems normally associated with hatchery procedure.

The water flowing through these tanks direct from the lake is alkaline and carries with it a mass of living organisms in which young trout have been found to thrive and grow very quickly. Spawning fish are collected and stripped in the feeder streams to the lake, their ova is taken to and hatched off in the Ubley Hitchery at Blagdon, and the young fish are transferred back to the Chew tanks when they have reached the feeding stage. These fish, planted in the troughs in the spring, were found to average 5¼ inches in length when harvested the following autumn, in comparison with an average of only 4¼ inches of fry of the same age reared traditionally in the hatchery.

When it is realised that one of the main problems (of many) in trout rearing is successfully and economically to rear fry from the early—yolk-sac absorbed—to the advanced or yearling stage, and that of vital importance in the subsequent size of the fish is the growth rate of their first twelve months of existence, it will be readily appreciated how important a step this new technique is for the future of the fishing in this great new lake. A sound and healthy stocking supply is of course essential—and appears to be assured.



SMALL BORES AT BISLEY

by W. B. Godwin

AFTER the record entry at the 1956 Small-bore Bisley, when there was an increase of 20% over the previous best, none but the most enthusiastic of optimists would have dared to forecast a further advance. Certainly not so soon, anyway. Even the competitions committee which prudently legislated for some extensions must have been surprised at the further 200 entries which brought the total up to 1,400; the highest ever and nearly three times that of twenty-five years ago.

To those who believe that enthusiasm for target shooting is proportionate to the interest in matters military, this Bisley must have been quite an eye-opener. Further shocks may be in store, for they do say that the target is 2,000 competitors by 1962.

For several years the maximum number of targets has been squeezed into the available space. So much so that the normal gap between each bay has disappeared. Consequently, the wind flags have to be tied up because they obscure the targets. Because the entry is outgrowing the accommodation, it was thought desirable to introduce a degree of restriction so that virtually there were two meetings.

Competitors who entered an event in the main Aggregates were not permitted to take part in the Unsquadded Aggregates which were confined to the first weekend. Perhaps those with a bent for statistics could argue that this arrangement was not justified but it did result in the week-enders winning their own competition. In previous years, the winners have come from those staying the full week and who, in consequence, had a wider choice of weather conditions.

A Point to Note

An interesting feature of the entry is that in the squadded events Class A competitors predominate, the numbers diminishing with each class down the scale. In the unsquadded competitions, the reverse is the case and Class D has the greater number. This may well be taken as an indication that the aspiring—but as yet unfledged—expert prefers to limit his efforts to a couple of days. In this he is very wise for he may find that a full week's shooting so early in his career is too much like hard work.

But it will be interesting to see the effect this two day aggregate has on future entries. No doubt as competitors gain experience they will graduate to the full programme but it is safe to assume that they will be more than replaced by those who find they can compete at Bisley without taking time off and by the steadily increasing band of newcomers to the sport.

Although competitors had no difficulty in completing their targets this time, one is left with the feeling that the problem of range accommodation is one that cannot be shelved for very much longer.

A very welcome innovation this year was the posting of the full prize lists immediately after completion of each shoot. Through this, it was possible to provide very good service for the Press and this was put to good use by local and provincial papers and some of the nationals, too. Actually, we did not pick a very good week for what with Wimbledon and the heat wave, the partially draped female form took pride of place as news. Problem: When does the commonplace cease to be news?

An Expert Eleven

Fortunately the day was saved by eleven-year-old Colin Edwards, son of "R.W." of East Bristol Rifle Club. Usually, the juniors make news because they are there, but Colin made it because of his shooting. Already a member of the British 400 Club by virtue of a full score over the Dewar course in the National League, his outstanding performance was in winning the Douglas Eyre Memorial Cup for the Class B 50 metres event. Class B, mark you! No kid stuff here; and on the most difficult target of all. His score was 399 and with the .25 gauge, even the "nine" went on. To prove that this was no flash in the pan, he took third place in the Class B Aggregate with 1580, only one point behind father's score in Class A. If by any chance his two worst cards add up to 193 or less, he too will be in Class A next year. Naturally, he won the Junior Championship.

No doubt schooldays will limit his activities during the next few years, but everyone hopes that shooting will remain his sporting interest.

As competitors arrived at the range, they had an immediate indication of the size of the entry by the new arrangement of the marquees. Instead of the horseshoe of recent years, they had been set forward to provide space for extra tents and car parking. Fortunately, the straight "toeing-the-line" effect of earlier times had been avoided.

The 1957 Bisley will be remembered for its blazing weather and perhaps for the breeze that defied most people's efforts to cheat it. The 100 yards event on Monday produced an astonishing number of crashes; there were no full scores and the winners of both the Class A and the Class B competitions, A. R. Shaw of Blackwall Yard, and M. J. Graystone of Bungay, were out on their own with 398 each.

The Dewar course shoot on Tuesday was pretty well the same story. No full scores and E. Marsden of Lytham St. Annes at the top of Class A with the only 399.

Wednesday provided memories of a different kind for those Amazons of the Randle Team who assembled for their match at 5.30 (a.m. not p.m.). Although the start was delay, the rain still persisted and to overcome the poor light and haze, the 100 yards targets were illuminated by car headlamps.

By nine o'clock the rain had stopped and the breeze was there as usual but had not yet begun its gruesome dance. Today, Class A took the field first and made hay, registering twenty-three scores of 400. Angus Smith of Glasgow Police won the trophy with 400—36x. By the time Class B had its turn in the afternoon, however, everything was back to normal and only Mrs. A. M. Bush of Ham and Petersham came up with a full house.

Treeless Worplesdon

At this stage, the scores made in the Aggregate were added to those of the postal trial to determine the thirty for the final Dewar trial and by seven o'clock in the evening aspirants for the honour of shooting in the international match of the year were assembled at Worplesdon,—a Worplesdon sadly shorn of its roadside trees.

By custom, very little is said about the Dewar Match until all the teams have shot and the official result is announced. But one record was achieved. Nina Lamberg became the first woman to shoot in the British Team a second time, her first appearance being in 1953. For

John Hall it was a coming-of-age party as he first shot in 1936. Tom Knight also represented the old brigade and is due for his key next year.

And so back to Bisley to finish the Aggregate with the 50 metres competition. A gentle breeze but manageable — if you knew how. Class A brought one score of 399 by R. N. Martin of Sunderland and Class B two competitors with one off; Colin Edwards and T. R. Greenway, Liverpool University. After all the arithmetic, Vic Gilbert and Valerie Hills shared the honours in the Grand Aggregate, the tie being settled in favour of the former by a two points better shoot at 100 yards. The competition was, in fact, very closely contested, the 1587 of the leaders being followed by six scores of 1586. Scores were low in comparison with previous years but, of course, the Bisley wind was at the top of its form. It played its part so well that no competitor succeeded in appearing in each of the four events making up the Grand Aggregate.

Friday dawned with an ominous portent—the band playing something that one suspected was, "You'd be far better off in a home." For those who had a few miscellaneous shoots to clear up, two stages of the Roberts and the Dewar Match in the evening, this proved to be more than a little true.

A Tense Scene

From an entry of around 450, 250 competitors qualified on Tuesday to fire in the first stage and by Friday evening 23 with scores of 398 or better had passed into Saturday's Roberts Final. Long before 2.30 the crowd had gathered behind the firing point, taking up positions where they could watch the progress of their favourites. Those with telescopes perched themselves on the bank. The triggers were tested and the hooter sounded for the start. Paper and pencils came out and calculations were made; delighted whispers and muttered dismay; the watchers more tensed than the shooters. After forty minutes, the scene moved to 100 yards. Someone reported three "clean" at 50 yards. Another said four.

Finally it was over. For most anyway. There was a tie; a triple tie someone said. It was just a tie between Parish and Gilbert. More tense moments and then Parish came up with a "possible" to Gilbert's 97 and there was a new Champion Rifleman of the Year.

The trophy winners were:

Home Countries International, Bovril Shield: England.
Ladies' International, Mrs. A. B. Culf Cup: England.
Overseas Team Match, British 400 Club Trophy: Northern Rhodesia, 1,549.
County Sextette, Sir Elliott Lees Shield: Warwickshire.
Astor County Championship, Winchester Cup: Lensbury and Britannic House, 1,191.
Queen Alexandra Cup: Warwickshire, 2,437.
The British Championship, Earl Roberts Trophy: D. R. V. Parish, Southwick, 598.
The English Championship, Royal Society of St. George Cup: D. R. V. Parish, Southwick, 598.
The Welsh Championship, "Western Mail and Echo" Cup: J. G. Ellis, Lensbury and Britannic House.
The Northern Ireland Championship, Northern Ireland Cup: J. W. Cunningham, Co. Londonderry XB.
Class A, 100 yds., Vickers Challenge Shield: A. R. Shaw, Blackwall Yard, 598.
Class B, 100 yds., Rutland Cup: M. J. Graystone, Bungay, 398.
Class C, 100 yds., Weetabix Cup: N. Brown, Leek, 394.
Class A, Devon Course, Captain Cup: E. Marsden, Lytham St. Annes, 399.
Class B, Devon Course, Mrs. Goodlake Cup: A. P. Bentley, Alton (Cedar Hill), 397.
Class A, 50 yds., Pethard Memorial Bowl: A. A. Smith, Glasgow Police, 400.
Class B, 50 yds., Walter McCloud Cup: Mrs. A. M. Bush, Ham and Petersham, 400.
Class C, 50 yds., Jaegar Bowl: A. Conners, Leeds University, 398.
Class A, 50 metres, Sir Power Palmer Cup: R. N. Martin, Sunderland, 399.
Class B, 50 metres, Douglas Eyre Memorial Cup: C. Edwards, East Bristol, 399.
Class D, 50 metres, Times Cup: Miss R. M. Rylance, B.I.C.C., Prescott, 395.
Class A, Aggregate, Codrington Memorial Trophy: V. H. Gilbert, Twickenham, 1,587.
Class B, Aggregate, Lever Bros. Cup: M. J. Graystone, Bungay, 1,583.
Class C, Aggregate, Sir Charles Walker Cup: N. Brown, Leek, 1,579.
Class D, Aggregate, F. Carter Cup: Miss R. M. Rylance, B.I.C.C., Prescott, 1,578.
The Veterans, Bailey Cup: W. Jacklin, Lytham St Annes.
Women's Open Meeting Championship, "Flowers" Trophy: Mrs. J. Hart, L.N.E.R., Chesterfield.
Women's Bisley Championship, H.R.H. Duchess of Kent Cup: Mrs. J. Hart, L.N.E.R., Chesterfield.
Junior Championship, S. F. Rhodes Cup: C. Edwards, East Bristol.

☆ ☆

Revolving Chamber Rifles

by Richard Arnold

IN "Letters to the Editor," a reader has queried why the revolving chamber system was not extensively applied to rifles before the introduction of modern high velocity ammunition. In actual fact, quite a number of revolving chamber rifles and carbines were manufactured, principally in the United States of America.

Many early attempts at manufacturing repeating arms, using the revolving chamber method, were made, even in the XVIth century, but though built on the lines of "chamber pieces" with specially turned steel cartridges, the gas escape from these early *breech-loaders*, militated against their success. When Samuel Colt introduced his revolving-chambered pistol he was merely improving, and reintroducing, a well-known and previously well experimented with, system. But his chambers were blind at the rear, and it was Smith and Wesson who introduced successful revolvers with cylinders open at both ends, using metallic cartridges patterned on Flobert's rimfire ammunition.

Readers familiar with American history will recall that the mail stage run between Sante Fe (New Mexico) and Independence (Missouri) was, to quote an official announcement, issued by the Commonwealth of Missouri in 1850, guarded by eight men, each of whom "has at his side, fastened to the stage, one of Colt's revolving rifles" as well as one of Colt's "long revolvers," and in his belt "a small Colt revolver."

A Heavyweight Grown-up

The first Colt repeating rifle was the "Paterson-Colt" of 1836; it was, in principle, a grown-up revolver. It was produced in .34 calibre and had the customary Colt cylinder holding eight shots. It weighed no less than 12½lbs. Later models were introduced in .44 calibre, and in 1836/38 a number were manufactured for .69 calibre. This latter model is greatly prized because it was hammerless and only about 100 were manufactured. The 1836 Colt-Paterson revolving rifle was discontinued in 1842. Various improvements were effected in models from 1837 to 1840, the most important being the 1837 model of eight shot capacity, .44 calibre, and the Paterson-Colt 1839 carbine with six shot cylinder. In 1857 Colt introduced a revolving percussion carbine with a side hammer, of five and six shot capacity, in different calibres of .36, .44, .56, and this was manufactured for about fifteen years. In 1858 Colt introduced his Model 1855 revolving rifle, five shot cylinders, again produced in calibres varying from .36 to .56, and some of these latter were used by Colonel Berdan's sharpshooters in 1862 prior to being issued with the Sharp's rifle. This was the last percussion arm manufactured by the Colt factory.

Smith and Wesson, of revolver fame, manufactured revolving rifles which were basically converted revolver pistols. Their excursion into rifle building was limited to revolving chamber weapons, and they introduced their first model in September, 1880, and continued production until 1887. They were chambered for a special Frank Wesson .32 rifle cartridge with a case which ran the full length of the cylinder, the nose of the bullet being nearly flush with the mouth of the case.

In 1866 Remington introduced a revolving rifle which was equipped with two cylinders, one for .36 percussion and the other for .38 short or long rimfire. They were not well received, however, on the grounds that they were *not powerful enough*, and production was discontinued about 1872.

All these models were moderately successful, but criticisms of the weapon must be considered. Take, for example, the Colt .56 calibre weapon which was issued to American troops. It was not popular because, unlike the more conventional weapons, the heavy explosion of the service charge was uncomfortably near the face. American Confederate troops used, fairly successfully, the Le Faucheux pin-fire, .44 revolving carbine, but gave much the same criticism. The Colt came in for further criticism; the 1855 model was often subject to a chain-fire reaction: all five shots discharging when the first was fired!

Other Disadvantages

The general trend, however, of military and sporting opinion was that although as a handgun the revolver had established itself, as a rifle the revolving chamber weapon was not successful. In percussion days the shooters suffered from burns on the left hand and wrist through fire escaping from the chamber, or even through the chain-reaction to which I have referred. The gas escape from the gap between cylinder and barrel also meant reduced power, militating against the express purpose of a rifle. Even with the introduction of metallic cartridges the revolving chamber rifle was not successful, though it was a definite step in the evolution of repeating arms.

There were other disadvantages, of course. The wear and tear of use gradually meant that the cylinders became out of alignment with the barrel. This resulted in bullets entering the rifling at an angle with consequent loss of accuracy, to say nothing of portions of stripped off metal striking the shooter.

Greener was full of praise for a British repeating rifle, the Needham, which incorporated the principles of hammerless ejection and the revolving tubular magazine. The Needham, in spite of Greener's enthusiasm, was a failure.

The revolving chamber rifle was, therefore, fairly extensively tried out, particularly in America, but when put to practical use was defeated by other, more efficient, systems long before high velocity cartridges were introduced.

Clay Pigeon Shooting

Fixture List

July 15-20: Daily Clay Pigeon Shooting events and practice (except Sunday, July 14), National Rifle Association's 88th Annual Prize Meeting, Bisley Camp, Brookwood, Woking, Surrey. Special additional events for Public School boys, July 22-24.

July 19: Childrey C.P.S.C., The Plough, Little Coxwell, Faringdon, Berks. Club Shoot. 6 p.m.

July 20: Blackpool G.C. Open Shoot. Class A and B.

July 20: East Riding of Yorkshire D.T.L. Championship, Pocklington G.C. 2 p.m.

July 20: 16th British Open Skeet Championship, Bedford and District Gun Club, Ampthill Road, Elstow, Bedford.

July 22-24: Public School Boys' Events, N.R.A., Bisley Camp, Brookwood, Surrey.

July 24: Cambridge G.C., Club Championship Shoot. 4.30 p.m.

July 24: Birmingham G.C., Brockhill Lane, Redditch. 6.30 p.m.

July 24: Cavendish G.C., Forest Town, Notts. 6.30 p.m.

July 25: Silloth Sports Clay Pigeon Shoot.

July 25: Bedford and District G.C., Elstow. Practice.

July 25: Carlisle and District G.C., Silloth Sports Clay Pigeon Shoot.

July 27: Southern Counties Skeet Championship, 80 birds.

July 27: Waltham Abbey G.C. Members' Shoot, Essex. 2 p.m.

July 27: Bowland and District G.C., nr. Clitheroe, Lancs. Open Cup Shoot.

July 27: Holderness and Humber W.F.A. Open Shoot, Holmpton Road, Patrington. 2.30 p.m.

July 27: Ulster Double-Rise Championship, Banbridge G.C., Ulster C.P.S.A.

July 27: Hayfield G.C., Derbyshire. Members' Shoot. 2 p.m.

July 28: Beverley and District G.C., Yorks. Members' Shoot. 2 p.m.

July 28: North of England Sporting Championship, Harrogate G.C., Yorks.

July 28: Royal Oak C.P.C., Cratemans Farm, Cowfold, Sussex. Skeet. 10.30 a.m.

July 29: West Sussex G.C., Goodwood, Chichester. Skeet Practice. 6.30 p.m.

July 30: Deer's Leap G.C., Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leics. Club Championships. 6.30 p.m.

Aug. 2: Childrey C.P.S.C., The Plough, Little Coxwell, Faringdon, Berks. Club Shoot. 6 p.m.

Aug. 3: Hampshire Skeet Championship, Boldre and District G.C., nr. Lymington.

Aug. 4: Harrogate G.C., Yorks. Members Shoot. 1.45 p.m.

* * *

Reports and Results

The Eastern Counties Sporting Championship was held at the Cambridgeshire Gun Club's shooting grounds, Moor Barns Farm, Madingley, Cambs.

The area championship was attended by 42 guns drawn from Bedford and District, Waltham Abbey, Colchester, Newmarket and Cambridgeshire Gun Clubs, with individual competitors from Kent, Dorset and Buckinghamshire. It was shot over 75 birds in five stages, consisting of 10 bolting rabbits, 20 driven grouse (10 pairs), 10 springing teal, 20 driven partridges (10 pairs) and 15 pheasants (five singles, five pairs).

The individual championship for the Eastern Counties Challenge Shield and Medal, with £3 added was won by A. J. Steele (Waltham Abbey G.C.) with 63 x 75 kills; the second prize, £2 15s., was won by E. A. Clarke (Colchester G.C.), and the third prize, £1 10s., went to L. Claydon (Newmarket G.C.). The novice prize (half pint pewter tankard) was won by J. A. De Haviland (Essex).

The Open Championship (£5) was won by W. G. Fiske (Waltham Abbey G.C.), with 60 kills; the second prize, £2 15s., went to D. R. Nielsen, and the third prize to P. G. Rickett, both of the Cambridgeshire G.C.

Silver spoons for the stage prizes were awarded to: 1st stage—J. Claydon (Newmarket); 2nd stage—J. Reynolds (Bucks); 3rd stage—J. H. Wiseman (Waltham Abbey); 4th stage—A. T. Fuller (Colchester); 5th stage—P. K. Radcliffe (Colchester).

The team event (teams of five) for the Eastern Counties Clay Pigeon Trophy, was contested by five teams (Cambridge 2, Newmarket, Waltham Abbey and Colchester). The Waltham Abbey team won the trophy with 273 x 375 kills, Newmarket being runners up with 251 kills. Each member of the winning team received a silver spoon.

The Waltham Abbey team were: D. B. Hare, J. H. Wiseman, A. J. Steele, L. G. Butters, W. C. Fiske. Mr. E. T. Peacock, Chairman of the Association, addressing the meeting, thanked all those responsible for its organisation, and those who had assisted in running the meeting, umpires, scorers, trappers and office staff.

The prizes were presented by Mr. Robert Adean, of Babraham.

* * *

Waltham Abbey Gun Club was well represented at the Eastern Counties Sporting Championships held on June 27 at the Cambridgeshire Gun Club's Sporting Ground.

The High Gun and the I.C.I. Eastern Counties Sporting Challenge Shield were won by A. J. Steele and the open Sporting Individual Championship by W. G. Fiske. The Team Event was won by D. B. Hare, W. G. Fiske, A. J. Steels, J. H. Wiseman and L. G. Butters.

At the Members' Shoot held on July 6, A. J. Foster won the Schultz Cup and also the Club Cup after a tie-shoot with A. J. Steele. Down-the-line event was won by A. J. Steele.

The next Members' Meeting will be held on July 27.

* * *

There was an excellent turn out for the **Lancashire Down-the-Line Championship** on June 15. Some excellent shooting was seen, and W. Heald won with 99 points out of 100. T. E. Sanders 94, and W. Blamire 92, were 2 and 3 in Class A.

Class B saw D. Kippax win with 87, O. Hart second with 86 and E. Baxter 84. W. Heald had four full scores of 25 in the day and a 20 x 20.

A Team Match ended the day and shooting went on until 9 p.m. W. Heald's team *v.* G. Jones' team. Sanders 92 x 100, Blamire 94, G. Jones 85, Sherlock 94, O. Hart 93, R. Hart 85, L. Carter 74, D. D. Marsden 77, "Uncle Sam" 80, made a total of 774 points for G. Jones' team. Heald's team went in and the captain made 100 points, Allen 92, R. Braithwaite 93, S. T. Bamber 90, A. G. Jones 76, E. Baxter 89, D. Kippax 85, F. Garlick 83 and T. Thompson 78, winning by only 12 points with 786.

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Fisherman's Diary

by Coridon

TROUT fishing in England (and I do not mean Great Britain) is fixed in the minds of most people as something undertaken with a wet or dry fly. This has been brought about by angling practice and, possibly even more, by angling literature. I have cause to think that non-fly trout fishermen now outnumber the fly fishermen.

I do not think many real purists ever existed—and by real I mean the man who studied a hatch, caught a fly, matched it from his stock or imitated it on the spot, and was not satisfied unless the trout he caught was taken on the hatch of the moment. In any case this sort of thing could only be done on the chalkstreams and the limestone rivers.

On the other hand there are scores of anglers who fish for trout only with fly, some of them keen entomologists who use their knowledge of natural history to aid their angling; and others who keep to anything from one to half-a-dozen patterns and rely upon skilful casting and correct presentation rather than on imitation.

A second group—and one to which I belong—prefers fly fishing for trout when the fly has reasonable chances of success, but has no qualms of conscience about using spinning, creeper fishing, upstream worming and similar methods when the nature of the water commends such practices and when they do not interfere with the angling pleasure of others.

There is, however, a very noticeable increase in the number of trout fishermen who never use fly. They cannot, of course, fish where only fly is allowed, but it is surprising how much water, both in rivers and reservoirs, can be legitimately fished by other means including the downstream worm.

This is a comment and not a criticism, but I always feel, when I talk to one of these anglers, that he is missing so much by not using fly. Most of them, I find, have taken to trout fishing after years of coarse fishing and are obsessed with the idea that fly fishing is a difficult art, competency in which is only acquired after years of practice. A few of them, unfortunately, seem to think there is a taint of snobbery in fly fishing. Many younger men have come straight to trout fishing and have learned nothing more than fixed-spool spinning.

They miss so much! I admit that, though I use other methods, nothing gives me such pleasure as the rise of a stalked trout to my dry fly. That is a personal matter dependent on outlook, but on the practical side there are many occasions when wet or dry fly fishing is the only likely method of taking fish, and he who fishes only by other means must then forego his sport.

Salmon—Fresh and Tinned

Mr. R. Erskine-Hill, Secretary of the A.C.A., in a letter to the Press, draws attention to the loss of salmon as food through the pollution of rivers. He quotes, as an example, figures of catches on the Tyne for the years 1927 and 1955. They were respectively: 30,139 salmon weighing 428,526lb. and three salmon (plus three sea trout) weighing 55lb.

Britain's food supply is of paramount importance, a fact which the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Foods obviously realises, since it encourages agricultural and pastoral products in every possible way. Yet the annual loss of some 140 tons of prime food from one river alone is apparently viewed with equanimity.

Mr. Erskine-Hill added that the cost of the quota of tinned salmon for the coming year was said in Parliament to be nearly £10,000,000, and there was a suggestion that this might be partially due to decreasing supplies of fresh salmon. I feel this is a *non sequitur*, for salmon and tinned salmon are worlds apart. They are as distinct as roast beef and bully; and I cannot believe that anyone who set out to buy a pound of fresh salmon and who was unable to find any, or was deterred by a price of 18s. or so, would shrug her shoulders (if ladies do such a thing) and make do with a tin of salmon. She would be far more likely to buy trout, or good quality sea fish—or alter her menu entirely.

I strongly suspect that our imports of tinned salmon between the wars were many times greater (by weight and not price) than they have been in any year since 1940. I seem to remember that one could buy a tin of low quality salmon in those days for fourpence.

This reminds me of one of my favourite stories of business effrontery. When tinned salmon first achieved popularity the demand for a time exceeded supply, and all along the Pacific coasts of the United States and Canada salmon of every possible kind were being caught and tinned by a score of firms. One firm, squeezed out elsewhere, caught and tinned the white-fleshed Alaskan salmon, and when it found its product was unpopular with the public it launched an advertising programme, using the slogan: "Does not go pink in the tin."

I doubt if it will stand up to biological or historical investigation, but it's a good story.

Shark Invasion

The number of blue sharks taken annually by members of the Shark Angling Club of Great Britain—and by those who aspire to become members and strive to catch a 70-pounder to qualify—is somewhat staggering to people without specific knowledge of sharks. Most people—including myself—knew that sharks came into British waters between May and October, but few thought that their numbers ran into many thousands, as must be the case when hundreds are actually caught.

However prolific sharks may have become in the past, 1957 should prove a record season for anglers. I have no idea how many have as yet been caught on rod and line, but there can be no doubt that the sharks have arrived in abnormal numbers. From several parts of the Cornish and Devon coasts come reports of shark packs damaging nets, driving fish away, and robbing long lines—sometimes even biting through the long line itself. Many relatively small blue sharks have been caught on long lines. Trawlermen in the area report that sharks in unprecedented numbers surround the boats when a catch is being gutted.

Mackerel Catches

The number of blue sharks in an area is largely governed by the food supply, and the "invasion" indicates that more than the usual quota of pelagic fishes must also be in home waters.

This is borne out by several reports of mackerel shoals of unusual size which have already come closer to the shore than is normal before August. Most of the reports come from Dorset, Devon and Cornwall, but on the last day of June an immense shoal swam into Bridlington Bay. So many were caught that they were stacked in piles on the piers and jetties for people to take away free. Two fishermen, each fishing a line with four hooks, brought in four mackerel at a time, catching between 600 and 700 in an hour—which meant eight fish every 45 seconds. Other Bridlington fishermen said the mackerel took bare hooks.

If Yorkshire folk think—as I do—that the best mackerel is a soused mackerel, the sales of vinegar must have risen in Bridlington that week-end.

Jane Austen

An unusual heading in an angling column, but Jane Austen died 150 years ago this week and it is permissible, I hope, to mention her only definite reference to fishing.

In her six novels she wrote only of humdrum everyday things with which she was personally familiar—which is why they are as restful as a quiet day's float fishing—and when she did for a moment write beyond her immediate knowledge she was careful to keep to generalities. So it was with the fishing incident.

She took Elizabeth (of "Pride and Prejudice") to Derbyshire on a visit to an uncle and aunt, whose home was situated close by the estate of Mr. Darcy, in whom she was more than interested. Uncle, aunt and niece were walking through his park by the river's edge when they encountered the fastidious Darcy himself. He was most affable, discussed fishing with the uncle and gave him the freedom of the river, circumstances which raised Elizabeth's hopes considerably.

Jane Austen took Chatsworth as her model for Darcy's home, and the river through the park was the Derbyshire Derwent. In her time and for many years afterwards it was private water, but I believe it is now fished by members of a club, while four rods are permitted to residents at the Peacock Hotel, Baslow.

Horseflies

It is a long time since I experienced such a good season for horseflies (the clegs of more northern parts) and a correspondingly bad one for the angler's flesh. They, and most other species of objectionable insect, have flourished exceedingly, and on some occasions when fishing I have been tormented almost to frenzy.

I do not know what their IQ rating may be, but they seem endowed with an exact knowledge of when an angler's hands are both engaged in some important task—landing a fish, for example. It is then that they descend on neck, cheeks and ears, and jab their irritant probosces well home.

Irish Fishing

It has always been easy enough to get up-to-date information about the salmon fishing of the Republic of Ireland and about the more popular trout rivers and loughs. Much of Ireland's trout water went unmentioned, however, and it is still not easy to get accurate details of the country's coarse fishing.

The latest edition of "The Angler's Guide" (an Irish publication roughly comparable to "Where to Fish," but covering only the Republic) was published nine years ago, and, admirable though it be, it can no longer be wholly relied upon.

The Irish Tourist Board has, I understand, decided to set up an advisory committee which will list the waters—game and coarse—for the benefit of visiting anglers. It seems at the moment that the information will be used only to answer specific queries, but it should surely make a popular and quick-selling book.

Incidentally, the Board is to spend £160,000 over the next five years on improving fishing. Stocking forms part of the scheme, but one of the main plans is to make some of the remoter rivers and loughs more easily approachable by reed-cutting, path building, and the erection of footbridges and fishing platforms.

Gundog News

Conducted by P. R. A. MOXON, Herne Common, Herne Bay, Kent

QUITE a lot of people seem determined to use a retriever for spaniel work, despite the fact that anyone with experience of both breeds will state flatly that a retriever never quests for unshot game as efficiently as the spaniel which, after all, is "built for the job." This subject — like most others relating to gundogs and their training — has been discussed in these pages before, and I have trodden on a good many toes when I have written of the difference between spaniels and retrievers as questers.

However, that a retriever *will* serve as a questing dog as well as a retriever proper. It is all a question of degree, training, and which breed you prefer. As I stated recently, a man is going to get far better results from a dog of the breed he prefers, even if the work it is called upon to do is not the orthodox work of the breed, than from a breed he cannot "take to." Thus, if a man really prefers, say, a labrador to any other breed, he will probably succeed in achieving good results from it as far as questing goes by careful training and patience.

It should be remembered that a retriever's natural instinct is to range very wide and to go over cover rather than under it. A good retriever keeps its nose high — much higher than a spaniel — and, let us face it, has not the natural love of rough cover that a well-bred springer or cocker will show. If these points are borne in mind from the commencement of training, you stand a good chance of success with your retriever which is to become maid of all work.

I consider it vitally important that the early training should include a good deal of work in rough cover, and equally essential is that questing and flushing work should be delayed until the dog has had half a season—preferably the best part of a season—working as a no-slip retriever. Furthermore, the usual long distance retrieving work in the dummy stage should be eliminated, or at any rate considerably curtailed. Many orthodox retriever people pay great attention to teaching their dogs to go out vast distances on both seen and blind retrieves, but if you do this with the all-purpose retriever you will only make a rod for your own back, and give it the impression that the horizon is the limit, thus making the question of close ranging a very ticklish one when the time comes.

Too Much Use of Stop Whistle

Retrievers treat their ground in a very different manner to spaniels, and although I do not deny that there are many retrievers serving their masters usefully as questers, I do believe that in many cases the owners have never seen a really first-class spaniel at work, let alone shot over it. I have found, when training retrievers for clients who wish them to work as questers, that one is the whole time fighting their instinct to make wide sweeps, and that the stop whistle has to be used far more frequently than it does on a good spaniel.

Furthermore, unless strict attention is paid to cover work in the early days, it is found that retrievers will tend to skirt it, or to deal with it in a very disdainful fashion unless they are certain that it holds something — alive or dead. Indeed, as far as really thick cover is concerned, I have found that few retrievers face it boldly until the middle of November when they have had several days' pleasant shooting.

The best questing retrievers I have seen have been in the hands of keepers, who use them not only for driving in their wandering pheasants, but take them to act as beaters on shooting days. Even then, there has always appeared that tendency to pull ahead unless constantly checked, and when the beating line draws near to the guns the retrievers frequently rush through and start picking up before the shooting has ceased. Not that this is unknown in the case of spaniels used in the beating line, of course, but having regard to the spaniel's different and specialised treatment of ground, it occurs far less frequently.

A correspondent reminds me of the subject of tone of voice in relation to dog training. This enthusiast tells me that he has well-nigh ruined a sensitive springer puppy by shouting at it in a very loud and angry tone. Indeed, he says the puppy became just as cowed when shouted at as one would expect most dogs to do after a severe whipping, and he thinks that a word of warning from me might serve to prevent other people from making the same mistakes as he has.

Importance of Tone of Voice

I have frequently alluded to this question of tone of voice in dog training, and I agree that few things are more important than to pay due regard to it. Most dogs are sensitive to tone of voice, and certainly all highly sensitive ones are to a very great degree. I am a firm believer in using the voice according to the circumstances and to the puppy under training. The gruff, grumbling tone should be reserved for deterring and punishing canine crimes, whilst good work should be rewarded by verbal praise in what I can only describe as a "highly delighted" tone of voice. Any normal man or woman is bound to get het-up from time to time when training their dog, and consequently to raise their voice much more than is really necessary, as well as to use the grumbling voice for very minor offences which may not really warrant it.

I am often an offender in this respect, being of highly-excitable temperament, but I try to control my voice as well as my other emotions when training, and I have found it pays off handsomely. Some of our best trainers are very quietly spoken men, seldom heard to raise their voives to their dogs—at least in public.

The way you say something is often more important to the dog than what you say. In other words, they come to associate the tone of voice with some particular action required of them. Try this out on your dog, and you will see what I mean. For instance, I can make most of my dogs sit to the word "door," if I say it in the same tone of voice as I do the totally dissimilar usual word of command "sit." This also applies to whistle blowing, for I have found that it is often the manner in which the whistle is blown rather than the actual note of the whistle that dogs notice.

Its Handler's Whistle

Many times I have known two handlers to be down in the line at spaniel trials, both using the same type of whistle and the same system of whistle commands, yet each dog has responded only to its own handler's whistle and has completely ignored that of the other men. This applies more especially to experienced dogs, of course, for I have seen youngsters quite foxed under similar conditions, and responding to the whistled commands of other handlers, much to their own handler's embarrassment.

My recent remarks on wildfowler's dogs, and request for views on what the wildfowling specialist should be trained to do, has resulted in several letters from readers. The first one I received came from Mr. A. S. Bishop, of Grange Park, who gives his ideas on the subject. "I may not be a wildfowl 'specialist,'" he writes, "but since it makes up the greater part of my shooting activities I would like to add some comments to the tidal wave of correspondence that will doubtless flow as a result of your recent article.

"First, however, I must cross swords with you over this steadiness business. Surely it is the *sine qua non* of all dog training to aim for this very desirable quality. My own dog tends to hold your views, so I speak from experience! Nothing can be more exasperating when having disturbed more duck with a successful shot than to have ones dog splashing around in full view. You may warm up the chill

The fowler's dog may have to retrieve heavy birds.

winter's air with a few well chosen epithets, but it is hardly likely to decoy the birds over your head. Apart from that, the dog's sudden departure from a cramped mud hide can be a dangerous and uncomfortable experience to the fowler.

"The points to consider are as follows. (a) If the bird is dead, reasonable delay is unimportant. (b) If the bird is winged and diving no dog will catch it, and will only prevent you from executing the *coup-de-grace* with another shot. Sword sheather! Actually, it has become my opinion that a good fowling dog must be as well-trained, if not more so, than his landlubber companion. Weighing up a few points on training routine, my particular idea of a dream dog would be thus. A well-bred, medium sized animal, strong, with a good thick undercoat, naturally reared (cod liver oil in winter, etc.), bold, intelligent, a good nose and trainable.

"'Curb' training programme would be concentrated upon steadiness to shot and fall, waiting on the drop alone (much more useful) for stalking than walking to heel), and response to whistle and direction both on land and in water. 'Encouragement' training would centre on marking, particularly by sound, this achieved by the use of weighty dummies at night time; retrieving a variety of wet and muddy coastal birds (I have seen several dogs 'refuse' a retrieve from some inaccessible place (to the shooter) simply because the bird in question was of a new species to the dog; navigation of wide stretches of water for unseen retrieves, and encouragement to keep alert and listen. My own dog frequently warns me of the approach of birds during semi-darkness.

"The question of steadiness to unshot game whilst out working can obviously be ignored on the tideway, but the dog would be trained to retrieve from among artificial decoys. (A vivid picture comes to mind of that one-eyed (literally) labrador of mine making a spirited retrieve of an 'uncertain' duck one moonlight night, no words of praise could do him justice as I watched his shadowy approach after minutes of diligent searching. Imagine my chagrin as he deposited a very dead *papier-mache* decoy in my eagerly outstretched hands!).

"To sum up, it strikes me that since the number of shots that offer themselves on a coastal foray are usually limited, it is desirable to obtain the maximum assistance possible from a well-trained animal as purse or patience will allow; and since most dogs will fall short of their trainer's hopeful expectations as far as steadiness is concerned, then surely it is better to set one's sights too high than too low? Having written much and said little, I have enjoyed this summer evening's mental excursion to my winter haunts, and look forward to reading the comments of more experienced readers."

Catching Diving Duck

This is just the sort of letter I like to receive —practical, interesting, and amusingly written with experience and sufficiently anecdotal to prove a point. There will be few coastal fowlers who will disagree with Mr. Bishop over his "dream dog," even if they disagree, as I do, that no dog can catch a diving duck. Indeed, I have known dogs which seemed to know as much about the job as did the duck, and at least one of my old favourites learned very rapidly just how and where to dive and seize its bird.

In this connection, I may add that a dog which is quickly on the scene of the fall will frequently be able to seize the duck before it has collected its shaken wits enough to dive. Many birds seem dazed for a while after hitting the water, even if only lightly winged, and that is the dog's golden opportunity.

I am in full agreement about the value of night training with dummies to teach a dog to mark by sound. Indeed, this is excellent training for any gundog, and also teaches it to use its nose to best advantage. The practice with "dirty" birds of different species is also to be recommended and is, again, of equal value to a land retriever.

Mr. Bishop has not altogether succeeded in persuading me that a steady dog is essential for fowling — though I grant that it would be in certain circumstances — and I hasten to add that my experiences have mostly been limited to marsh shooting (not coastal fowling) where birds were few but the time factor most important. I am all in favour of the anti-decoy training (widely practised in the U.S.A.), and I hope that other readers will be as grateful for, and as interested in Mr. Bishop's letter as I have been. More views and experiences, please!

* * *

The English Setter Club will hold its 57th Field Trial Meeting for pointers, setters, weimaraners and German short-haired pointers, under the Rules and Regulations of the Kennel Club and the English Setter Club, at Knaresdale and Asholme, near Alston, Cumberland (by kind permission of Mr. D. Renwick), on July 29 and 30. Judges: The Rev. Father J. Bannon, C.C. (Ireland) and Mr. E. de O. Lane (Portugal).

Two Men and a Boat

(Continued from page 565)

Returning to our hides, now feeling nicely refreshed and much warmer, we awaited what might come our way. We took turns watching a variety of waders through the glasses. A skylark obliged us overhead with its unbroken chain of song. Fascinated, I watched this little master of melody, and was brought to earth by a shot from Brian. I looked his way, just in time to see a wigeon hit the ground with a satisfying thump. We thought things would liven up, now that a start had been made, but only a few shots were fired, and no more duck were bagged. A few curlew came over, but these were now out of season. As the day wore on, the tide started to fill the channels, and slowly it crept in. Great packs of waders eagerly feeding were gradually pushed higher and higher on to a ribbon of soft mud, busily probing it, seemingly to get that last morsel before the tide completely enveloped it. No duck came with that tide. The sun was shining as on a summer's day and no doubt they were out resting on the main, having fed contentedly all night under the moon.

When the tide reached our island, we loaded the boat and set off on a daylight survey, hoping to stir up a few duck at the same time. This we did, but shooting from a boat has its limitations, and the fellow with the oars has to be considered. As the tide neared its peak, great flocks of dunlin raced past us like a speeding cloud, their colour changing from brown to silver, they twisted and turned as one body. We pulled alongside a long, lean island, the last between us and the open estuary. Quite a number of duck flew over, some even rose from the other side of the island. A pair of mallard came within range, but on the wrong side; I could not swing on to them owing to my position in the boat. The tide was just about at its peak when we decided to leave. There was little of the lean island visible now. A hide here would be very wet indeed at high tides, but it looked a promising place to be tried next season.

Just as we were leaving, a single duck came over, well up but in range. It was a pintail, the first I had seen here. I gave it the left barrel, but alas my luck was out. I believe I was feeling the effects of the lack of sleep.

The row back was quite uneventful. We stopped at our base island to check that nothing was left behind in the hides; then made for land. Wearily we stepped ashore, pulled the boat out of the water and checked our gear. We were shocked to discover that we had left the spade behind. It was back there on that island, hidden under a pile of sea-wrack, out of sight from wary fowl and we had overlooked it when checking the hides. There was no question of leaving it behind, for it did not belong to me. I had borrowed it from a friend. We lowered the boat back into the creek and the inexhaustible Brian gamely pulled at the oars. The going was slightly easier this time, as we had no gear aboard. There was no time to be wasted, for the tide had turned and it soon emptied from this creek. We were not at all keen on the idea of pushing the boat back on the mud. However, the spade was collected, and this I used as an extra paddle to speed our return. We got back with a few inches of water to spare then settled down for a final cup of tea and biscuits.

So ended the great day we had planned and worked hard for, with only *one* wigeon in the bag. *That* is wildfowling, with its unexplainable magnetism, so unpredictable, so dependent on our unreliable weather. But we would not have it any different. It had been a good test for our pride and joy, and well satisfied we were with her performance. An outboard motor to take out the hard work is planned for next season if one can be purchased cheaply enough If not, we will make one!

Wildfowling Clubs

The Wildfowlers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland: Hon. Secretary, Lt.-Commdr. J. W. Anderton, R.N.V.R., 19 Castle Street, Liverpool, 2.

Recently the Dorset W.C. released twenty Canada geese, four on the reservoir at Parkstone G.C., ten at Poole Park, and six on Colonel Scott's estate at Encombe. The birds are all fit and have settled down well, although sticking to the centre of their respective lakes. The Club is shortly to release mallard.

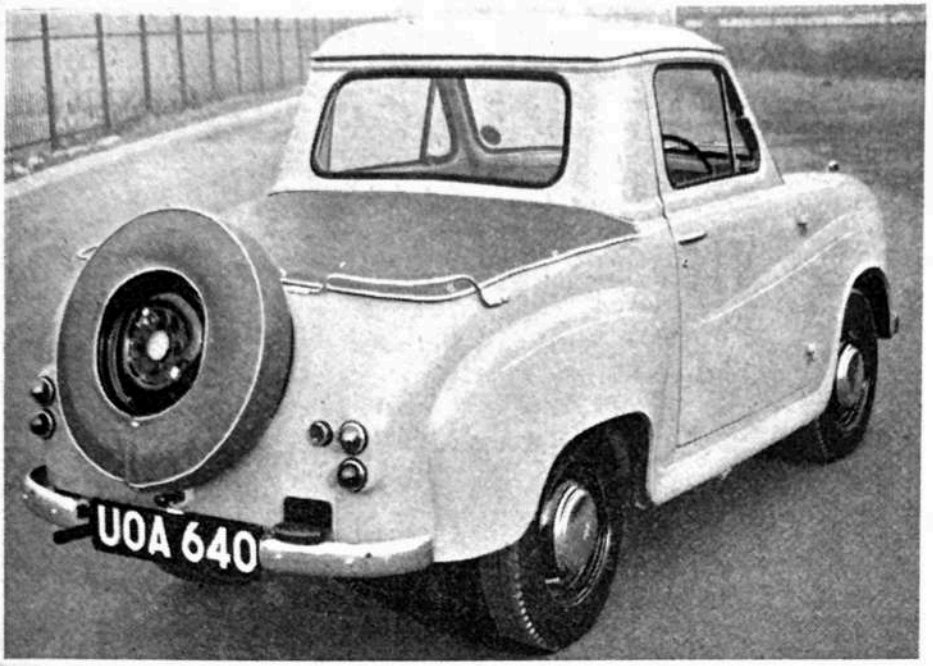
* * *

The new hon. secretary of The Langstone and District Wildfowlers' Association is Mr. P. R. Searle (36 West Street, Emsworth, Hants.).

* * *

The Hull and East Riding W.A. is holding an open clay pigeon shoot (open to non-members) on July 27. The programme includes: (1) The Holderness and Humber W.F.A. Open Cup (Perpetual); (2) Sweepstakes (10 birds down-the-line); (3) Shoot-off for Members Cup and Novices Spoon, presented by Mr. S. W. Duncan. The shoot will start at 2.30 p.m. Site: Alkinson's Field, Holmpton Road, Patrington.

Stanley Duncan II takes his turn at the trap at a recent shoot of The Hull and East Riding W.A.



The draught-proof comfort of a two-seater and a fair load capacity.

The Austin A35 Light Pick-Up

by Our Motoring Correspondent

THIS vehicle, a somewhat unusual type these days, puts me in mind of a 4 cylinder Chevrolet box car which I drove many years ago in the Sudan.

I still remember the pleasure it gave me to be able to sling all manner of queer shaped impedimenta into the open box at the rear without having the sometimes tricky problem of packing the same into an enclosed space.

I also remember the ease with which the box car, lighter in body than the tourers, covered the salty, sandy track from Port Sudan to Suakin, that ancient slaving port, off which some of the finest sea fishing possible, with barracuda, shark and other game fish, is to be had.

I am sure now, that the Austin A35 of today, in spite of its smaller engine and vastly lower petrol consumption, would cover that self-same track with even greater ease.

The performance of this little car is excellent on road, track and common and on a sand track I have lately located, which, whilst not the Red Sea Coast, is no easy hazard.

The new four speed gear box, with close ratio third and top, has a quick action change controlled by a short, sports-car type gear lever, floor-mounted to the left of the driver, and the hand brake is between the right hand door and the seat.

Whilst on the subject of gears, I was impressed and delighted with the second and third gears of the A35. In second I raced like a gazelle from five to thirty-five m.p.h. and in third, perfect in traffic or passing on the highway, there is an effortless acceleration from twenty to forty-five plus, in no time at all.

The dashboard instruments are reduced to an efficient minimum and are grouped in a central position with speedometer (accurate) and mileometer above and oil indicator, fuel gauge and ignition indicator below. On the lower edge of the parcel shelf, which extends right across the car, are the switches for the heater motor, the windscreen wiper, the panel light and the ignition. Above, to the right and left of the speedometer are the starter and choke, and right on the top of the dashboard is the trafficator switch, so placed that, assuming you are looking at the road you cannot fail to be reminded to centralise after a corner.

The light switch, on an arm extending to the right of the steering column, has four positions of off, side, dim and head, the 17 inch steering wheel, with central horn button, is comfortably angled and the steering itself is accurate and sufficiently direct for you to feel any drag and correct it in time.

The two seats are well upholstered, the driver's being easily adjusted to suit any length of leg and the passenger's having three fixed positions while both backs tip forward giving access to floor space for guns, attache cases etc., and there is a ledge beneath the rear window (full width and excellent visibility), suitable for rods, shooting sticks or umbrellas.

Behind is the box dicky or tonneau, having a floor space approximately 4 feet square and sides about 1 foot 3 inches high: Needless to say, this does not confine one's load (5 cwt odd) to 15 cu. ft., since one can build up well above the sides.

Back to the Engine

If the load is to be human, the floor boards, divided into three, come into play: The foremost (and they all lock), holds the tools beneath it. The middle one folds forward to be held under the rear window at an angle making a back rest while the rearmost folds through a complete semi-circle disclosing a well for the feet and making a seat. A few cushions from the house and there is surprisingly pleasant accommodation for two, riding back to the engine. The spare wheel is locked on to the rear.

Obviously, in spite of its very fine performance, this is not everybody's car and I personally, as a family man with three children, prefer the estate car with its four seats and occasional large load capacity, but for those who want a really good-looking car, the draught-proof comfort of a two seater, a fair load capacity and only occasional passengers, the A35 Light Pick-up is a first-class proposition.

PIG AHOY!

by Taproot

COWS can be content but pigs know how to live. Pigs have that innate zest that often charges rather fat people. They feed and quarrel with gusto; they rush about on their own absorbing business—I'm thinking, of course, of pigs on free range—and when they relax it is a complete letting slip of care like a tired partridge shooter wallowing in a hot bath at the end of a perfect day.

I hope I am not one of those people who get all whimsy about the imagined thoughts and feelings of animals. But the pigs here are my special private chore. I feed them every day, Sundays included. I de-louse them, supervise their farrowings, stifle their shrieks under the ministrations of our local pig-cutter.

Naturally, I cannot help noticing a thing or two about their temperament. Probably alone among farm animals pigs have a capacity for real and positive happiness. Above all, they value freedom and I suppose this is why no modern farming development has given me more pleasure—both direct and vicarious—than the special pig-leys introduced by Dunns of Salisbury about five years ago.

Breeding stock has always done best on a free range system. Anybody with a fellow feeling for pigs likes his sows to have the run of a copse or orchard where their rooting propensities won't matter too much. For one thing, piglets seldom suffer from anaemia and associated health troubles when running on fresh soil, and in fact pigs of all ages are rarely ill if they lead an outdoor life.

Past attempts to find a true grazing mixture for pigs all failed in the last resort because the herbage on offer never quite sufficed to eradicate the urge to root. Then trials by Sir George Stapledon narrowed the pig-palatable grasses to one—meadow fescue; and also selected one herb—chickory, and one clover—S.100, as the components of the ideal pig sward.

I gave this mixture a first trial here four years ago, carrying out a direct re-seed in April on a three-acre meadow behind my piggeries. The sows loved it from the start, and soon divided the day into two long grazing periods interrupted by a siesta at mid-day. The saving in food was tremendous, and when the sward grew beyond them in July we put some calves in for nearly a fortnight to bring it within bounds.

The most noticeable thing was that no rooting took place. At first I attributed this to the deep-rooting character of the chickory, the theory being that this plant brought to the surface in its leaves all those mysterious minerals that pigs formerly sought by digging. That autumn, not realising the inevitable limitations of the new system, I kept the sows rather too long at grass. When the meadow was grazed bare they *did* begin to root and made a pretty fine mess before I moved them. Today, I hold the view that sheer abundance of leafy food rather than some obscure tapping of mineral resources is really responsible for clean grazing.

During the summer season my dry sows only average 2lb. of cubes a day, broadcast in the pig-field after tea. I get a great deal of satisfaction from watching the studiously bent heads dotting the middle distance as I quietly open the gate, unshoulder my bag of cubes, and begin to lay a trail beside the fence. If still undetected by the time this rite is finished, I then give a stentorian "Pig Ahoy!" All the heads go up simultaneously like startled pinkfeet. Somebody gives an explosive snort and then the Rowley Mile at Newmarket simply isn't in it.

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DOGS

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